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ABSTRACT

The three Summer Institute articles in this publication urge teachers of English language arts to base their teaching on an awareness of how language operates and on an understanding of children's needs. Among the topics dealt with are the central role of literature in the English curriculum, the need for teachers to attend to children and accept the language they use, and ways of helping children to build representations of reality and to internalize the structural forms of written language. A fourth article discusses language arts teaching in open plan elementary schools. (GW)

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Teaching English

The Journal of Teachers of English in Scotland

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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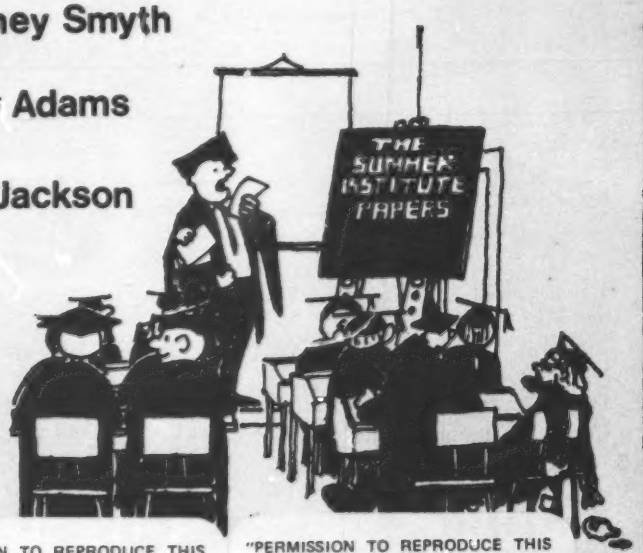

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CITE was established in September 1967 with the support of the Scottish Education Department.

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He invites articles, reviews, original poetry for possible publication.

Copy for the next issue should be submitted by 28th November 1975.

SYDNEY B. SMYTH, M.A.
Director

TEACHING ENGLISH

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Thank You, Callendar Park

The Summer Institute, Scotland's biennial two-week residential conference for English teachers, held this year in Callendar Park College, Falkirk, is almost impossible to sum up. It consists of 26 courses of which any one teacher will take only three. Though every participant will form his own impression of the conference's value, all will agree, however, that the organisation was excellent. For this, the main credit must go to co-directors Gillian Campbell, H.M.I. and Ian Brison of Callendar Park and to the secretary of the directing panel, Michael Cook, also of Callendar Park.

The hospitality offered by the Callendar Park was beyond praise. The resources of this small college were put under considerable strain. But Janitors, Kitchen and Domestic Staff, Audio-Visual Department and reprographic services all remained helpful and cheerful. Thirty members of the *academic* staff took turns to act as barmen (unpaid) in the staff club. The sense one had of a whole institution putting itself about willingly and happily to make its visitors welcome is a measure of the admirable spirit and morale of the entire College.

The Institute Papers

The plenary lectures at the Institute are inevitably of a general nature, and to print three of them is to give *Teaching English* an uncharacteristically "theoretical" look. We promise to revert to our normal practical emphasis in the next issue.

The two additional papers were by Fred Inglis and W. McIlvanney. We hope to print Mr McIlvanney's talk in a future issue. Mr Inglis's paper will appear in *The Use of English* (Scottish Academic Press, Perth Street, Edinburgh).

After Regionalisation

We shall review in our next issue the situation in Local Development as it has emerged after Regionalisation, and shall be in touch with L.D.C. office-bearers to this end. If you are one such, and have not heard from us by November 24th, contact CITE.

English and the Curriculum

SYDNEY SMYTH
Director, C.I.T.E.

The need for a statement on the place of English in the curriculum and its special rôle in the schooling of children has been brought into sharp focus by the establishment of the Munn Committee on the Curriculum at SIII and SIV, and by the Dunning Committee on Assessment at SIV. That the whole curriculum *and* the examination procedures should be simultaneously under review is remarkable; the outcomes could be sensationally radical . . . they *could* be.

There ought, of course, to be no problem in making the required statement on behalf of English. There are five good reasons for saying this: Bulletins One to Five in fact. To these may be added the weight, literal and metaphorical, of the Bullock Report which confidently treats English as of central importance in all stages of schooling.

Those who think that English has fallen away from some past perfection!

In schools, however, there is not quite the degree of certainty and confidence that an outside observer might anticipate. Both among English teachers themselves and among their colleagues in other subjects there exist doubts about the way English teaching is going.

The signs of doubt are many. A few examples will bring a host of others to mind. There are, for example, those who think that English has fallen away from some past perfection. Five, ten, fifteen or perhaps twenty years ago, "The idea of social engineering had not begun to spread its insidious poison . . . we still taught English, not a nasty hybrid of civics and sociology." Then, there are those who think that English has lost its definition. Alexander Russell, writing in the *Times Educational Supplement*, reviewing our present discontent, said that much of it arises "from uncertainty about what we are supposed to be doing." He went on to say, among other things, that "the English teacher must stop trying to teach everything." And, of course, there remain a large number of people who regard the English teacher as a teacher of spelling and punctuation and who are made uncomfortable by changes which they perceive but with which they don't sympathise. James Carmichael of Queen Anne High School, Dunfermline, for instance, has said "the shift of emphasis in English teaching to motivation, activity and creativity has produced a diminished regard for the formal aspects of English such as punctuation, spelling and syntax."

The Orthodoxy

Why all this uncertainty? I want to review some of the doubts and suggest an explanation for them, but first it is necessary to sum up where, in practical terms, we have come to over the past ten years of innovation in English teaching.

The orthodox ideology of the Bulletins has stressed the development of language skills, and through and alongside them, the personal development of pupils. These aims are to be pursued in real or realistic contexts relevant to the pupils' concerns—rather than through exercises however soundly based these may be on an analysis of language skills. The key ideas have been *context* and *relevance*.

In classrooms this has produced changes of the following kinds:

(*a*) A reduction in the teaching of formal grammar.
(*b*) An increasing use of techniques designed to create realistic contexts such as:
  (i) project work;
  (ii) thematic work;
  (iii) the use of a single work of fiction or drama as a core for a full range of activities.
(*c*) A sharp increase in the study of contemporary and recent literature.
(*d*) Considerable increase in personal expressive writing.
(*e*) Considerable increase in oral work of varying degrees of formality.
(*f*) Some increase in the use of audio-visual materials and aids.

How great the changes have been has varied from classroom to classroom and English Department to English Department, but the changes are real enough. The principles on which they rest—context and relevance—have been unexceptionable. Yet there is continued uneasiness. This uneasiness is commonly expressed in terms such as the following: we know that teaching analytical grammar is unfruitful, but what then should we say about language to replace it?; projects are fine, but how can an ordinary human being sustain the sophistication and stress of such complex programmes of work, especially when much of the material has to be produced by himself for, at least in first and second year, a wide range of reading abilities?; are we being fair to children to deprive them of the experience of literature before that of the twentieth century?; is there no danger that in our assessment of "personal expressive" writing we find ourselves marking personality rather than expression?

Unease

Complaints of this kind are common and could be multiplied. I want to go beyond their specificity and suggest two more general reasons for the unease.

Here is the first. There is a tendency, endemic I think in all educational enterprise but particularly so in times of innovation, to mistake means for ends. We stand in danger, for example, of forgetting that the project is a device the better to enable us to educate children through English and we expend our energies on sustaining the project itself, devising more and more assignments which tend to become indistinguishable in quality from textbook exercises. Similarly, thematic work becomes an end in itself and we find ourselves searching about for literature to sustain the theme even if the literature is less than first-rate quality.

The second reason is that all the various activities that I have listed are seen as additional extras, more things to do, more to be crammed into inadequate timeslots. Time has to be found for drama, creative writing, for film study, in addition to all the reading and writing that we do for exam purposes. So that although many current changes have been encouraged to combat fragmentation in the English curriculum they have had the effect of increasing the sense of fragmentation, the sense of having to do a host of different things to no very clearly defined end.

If there is anything in this analysis it follows that what we need urgently is some central idea or concept which will restore or clarify our sense of purpose and by which the multifarious activities in which we now engage or at least are urged to engage are brought into relationship with each other and fall into a pattern.

I don't wish to suggest that there is a total absence at the moment of such guiding principles. The Bulletins in fact offer us the "development of linguistic skills and the provision of experience which will enrich the lives of pupils and contribute to their personal growth." John Pearce and Anthony Adams have recently offered a view similar to this in the phrase "a competence-and-growth model for English teaching." I don't suggest that this formulation is wrong. I suggest that it is inadequate and particularly so in the reference to "personal development" which remains inadequately defined. It is arguable, moreover, that what is meant by "language skills" is equally inadequately defined. But since my own view of English teaching is that if we get its main thrust and direction right, "language skills" will, to a very important degree, look after themselves, I am less concerned with this second possible inadequacy.

Reformulation

I want then to offer a reformulation. When I tell you what its two main features are I

am confident that many of you will agree that it is offensively reactionary. These two features are, first, that literature should be central to our concept of English teaching, and, second, that we should think of English as an intellectual activity. Literature and the intellect, of course, are banner terms. They are banners that will rally enthusiasm in some and produce spleen, gall and bitterness in others. Either reaction might be over-simple.

Here then, for what it's worth, is my formulation. English, I suggest, is that set of activities whose aim is to enable pupils to derive from experience the kinds of meaning that have been and continue to be found in literature. So to put it is to put it densely and you are entitled to ask: what do I mean by "activities"?; what do I mean by "kinds of meaning" and perhaps, even, what do I mean by "literature"? To dismiss the last question first, I certainly don't mean "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" for 3D. Beyond that I think the term ought to define itself as I go on.

Most important are what I mean by "the kinds of meaning that have been and continue to be found in literature." I think of these as being principally about:

1. Personal identity: the meaning of selfhood.
2. The nature of other persons and personal relationships.
3. The relationship between the individual person and others en masse: the individual and his social relationships.
4. Ethical and moral relationships: the obligations that individuals have to each other and the obligations inherent in social relationships.
5. Philosophical and religious meanings: the relationship between the individual person and the whole astonishing fact of existence.

That perhaps sounds pretentious, but I think that with reflection you may agree that in fact these *are* the kinds of things that as an English teacher you talk about, and encourage your pupils to talk about when, for example, you read a story or a poem with them. And I believe you do this with all your pupils, from your Sixth Year Studies class, through your fourth year leavers, to your mixed ability first year. You do this at any rate when you are exploring *meaning* though sometimes you may be tempted—as which English teach has not?—into talking about mere linguistic *forms*, forgetting that these have significance only in so far as they have to do with the exploration of meaning.

No restriction

Two important additional points are worth making about this view of the English teacher's job. The first is this. It does not particularly matter if my analysis of the nature of literary meaning is fully accurate and fully comprehensive because the literature is there to carry its own meaning. The stories and the poems and the plays protect my pupils from my personal stupidity—if I am being stupid. Secondly, in helping children to derive from experience the kinds of meaning that literature deals with I don't have to restrict myself to using literature only. I insist I am not offering a recipe for exclusively text-based courses. I can certainly use folk song and pop song and film and photocards, provided these are selected as having the artistic power to enable children, perhaps with my help as a teacher, to enter into a human experience, to relate it to their own and to explore it and to create from it some of the kinds of meaning that I have listed. I can certainly use improvised drama provided that the improvisation is the expression of experience and not simply an imitation of a television series or an old-fashioned "B" adventure film. I can even (!) do projects of the *Projects in Practice* type provided that the situation created allows the children, from the basis of the experience and knowledge that they already possess, to explore it in order to develop the kinds of meaning that I have referred to; provided, to put it negatively, that the project is not simply an excuse for doing a range of language exercises on, for example, "register" or some other comfortable alternative to the securities of old-fashioned formal grammar. I can certainly use direct experience by basing my work on visits arranged out of school provided I know what their purpose is. There is almost nothing, indeed, that I cannot appropriately use in the English classroom but I emphasise that literature and the kinds of meaning that it embodies is my touchstone. It is in that sense that I am suggesting literature should be central.

I am asking that we should see the stories we read, the themes we study, the films we

watch as materials to reflect upon. I now want to add that I should like us to think of pupils' creative work as modes of reflection, as ways of exploring experience, and of deriving meaning from experience. That, after all, is what creative work in literature and the other arts has always been about and always will be about. It is by the kind of criteria implicit in this way of thinking about creative writing that we should judge the writing that children do, the films they make and the slide-tape productions they put on. We should not judge these by how successful a pastiche they are of other people's work.

No easy way to make a distinction between academic and non-academic work.

Now may I draw your attention to one other point implicit in this view of English teaching. It is this. There is no easy way to make a distinction between academic and non-academic work. If what the game is about is the derivation of meaning from experience, then this is a proper activity, not for a small section of clever pupils, but for everybody. Indeed everybody *will* do it. "The brain being brain must have laws" and that is true even though the brain is not the kind that conventionally succeeds in the school system. Of course it is true that as pupils' awareness develops, as their power to derive meaning increases they will increasingly face the fact that the literature that they read and the films that they see are not of the same order as direct experience, and that in order to continue to explore their meanings it is necessary to reflect on the nature of the medium itself. This is, in large part, what the "academic studies" of any art form is. Indeed, there is a sense in which the end of the academic study of literature consists in so understanding the nature of the medium that you know what literature is *not* about.

There is a second consequence in this view of English teaching. I have used the verb "derive" in talking about how children make meanings from experience. If I have given the impression that the meanings are there ready-made, waiting to be discovered like little nuggets of gold, then I have given the wrong impression. As we all do, children *construct* their meanings, *construct* their sense of themselves and the world in which we live. If they are to be free, as free as the conditions of being human permit them to be, they have to become conscious of the way in which they construct their reality. This is why I earlier used the banner term "intellect" in saying that we should think of English as an intellectual activity. Partly, but very importantly, the ideas and the values that we consciously hold, shape us and make us what we are. Hence the importance of open reflection on the meaning of experience.

Talk

And it is here that I make brief reference to something that in these times, post-Bullock, you would expect to hear a lot about in any lecture on English teaching, and that is the importance of talk in the classroom. Talk is important not because 95% of pupils' communication will be oral, or because the telephone exists and the television exists and the radio exists and written communication is less important than it used to be. Even if that were true it would be a trivial reason. Talk is important because it is through talk that we construct for ourselves our view of the world and of external reality. From the teacher's point of view this means accepting forms of language that for a long time were held to be undesirable in schools and in the English classroom in particular. I feel there is no need to say much on this matter because we have been well instructed by writers like Britton and Barnes in these matters. I suspect, moreover, that from Mr Adams tomorrow and

from Mr Jackson later in the week you will hear a good deal about language in general and talk in particular.

I would only add this: the *kind* of talk is important. It should be talk to some purpose. I will give you a phrase to sum it up. It is a phrase preceded by an anecdote.

Some years ago I visited a primary school in Balloch and saw one of the Primary 3 classes. We had what is known as a class discussion. They had been doing work on how Red Indians lived by means of the buffalo, and they were ready to talk about animals, how they should be treated and what the relationship between humans and animals should be. There was much talk about how pets should be treated, how you should deal with dangerous dogs, for instance, when these were dogs loved and valued by other people. The discussion went on far too long: as is well known, "the concentration span" of seven-year-olds is very limited. But they were willing to talk on this subject for at least half-an-hour. When I tried to stop them they made protest noises. They told me they liked doing this kind of thing. I said to them, "What in fact do you think we've been doing?" and one voice said, "Having a conference." Conference! I thought that was rather good for Primary 3. Then another voice said, "We've been having a concert." I did not know what to make of that, and all I could think to say to the boy who had offered this description (he was, by the way, a small, shining negro) was, "What kind of concert?" and without a pause he replied, "A brain concert."

A brain concert. That is what I think schooling at best is, that is what I think English teaching should be, and that, indeed, is what I hope this Summer Institute will turn out to be.

Hero

One Saturday night,
Lost in a "Green Citizen"
Plucked from my fat delivery bag,
I met him
Lurching round Irvine Cross
And buffeting up the High Street,
As fu' as five puggies
And holstered with screwtops.

That afternoon,
I had yelled myself hoarse for him,
For he was the wee man,
The one who split defences
And ran them jelly-legged,
Who pistoned into continents of space
Creating certainties and leaving goalies gawping.

My turn now,
Baffled and flat-footed,
The paper flapping punily in my numbed hands,
When he staggered through my fantasies
Spilling reality with every step.

William Barr

Language in the School

ANTHONY ADAMS
Lecturer in Education, University of Cambridge

In the first of these plenary sessions we heard Sydney talk very enthusiastically and skilfully about the need to re-direct our attention to consider what exactly is the nature of our task as English teachers, to concentrate more *upon ends* rather than continue the debate *about means* that has dominated much thinking about English teaching in the past decade. I want tonight to continue this dialogue and I want to shift the emphasis, at least as my starting point, from a concern with literature to a concern with language. The fact that my title is "Language in the School" and not "language in the classroom" is an important distinction because I am going to be arguing for the rôle of language within the total school environment rather than considering solely the rôle of language inside the English classroom. A lot of what I want to say is implicit in the Bullock Report and especially that section of the Report dealing with language across the curriculum.

There has, in England certainly, been a tremendous shift of emphasis in the last 10 or 15 years away from thinking of literature pure and simple as the main concern of the English teacher to a new, and much better informed, concern with the whole matter of language. If you compare the Newbolt Report of 1921 on the Teaching of English in England with the Bullock Report you can see this shift in emphasis written very clearly indeed. The Newbolt Report stressed that for English children no form of knowledge could take precedence over their knowledge of English and especially of English literature. Open the Report at random and on almost every page you will find arguments for the teaching of English literature and how to go about doing it. The shift at that time was away from a predominantly classical curriculum and the assumption that if you were an educated person you had read Latin and Greek. The Newbolt Report argued strongly, and rightly in my view, that there needed to be a shift from classical literature to English literature at the core of what happened in English classrooms. But if on the other hand you open the Bullock Report at random, you will find reference after reference to the teaching of language and the differences between the two Reports seem to me to symbolise a shift that has taken place in the teaching of English in the post-war years. There are reasons why such a shift has taken place and I want to explore these for a while because it is a shift that has led to precisely the confusion and uncertainty of rôle amongst English teachers that Sydney was speaking about last night. The new concern with language has come about partly as a result of changed values in our social and educational system and especially because of the move towards comprehensive education and,

"Re-examine what we are doing . . . as teachers of anything, in order to cope"

very often, mixed-ability teaching within the comprehensives. Moreover, the enormous problems of the inner-city schools over the last ten years have forced us to re-examine what we are doing, not just as English teachers but as teachers of anything, in order to cope with the problems and the opportunities offered in the inner-city schools.

Pure literature

The pure literature lobby—and there is still

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in England today a very strong pure literature lobby—has always been essentially an élitist one. It says essentially that what we have gained from, what has proved to be good for us, must also be good for the children we teach. At the very least I think we have got to ask some questions about what kind of literature we are talking about, what sort of reading material will fit the educational context of which I have been speaking. We may also have to re-define the whole approach we make towards providing this literary experience. I find with many of my own students, all with good honours degrees in English, that very often their academic background is a positive dis-service so far as their ability to work in English classrooms is concerned. They come along thinking that they are going to be teaching Edmund Spenser or George Eliot to thirteen-year-olds in London schools and it takes three or four months preparing them for the classroom to get rid of this idea in some cases. One is reminded of that remark in *Hard Times* about Mr M'Choakumchild: "If he had only learned a little less, how infinitely better he might have taught much more." Often, perhaps, we as teachers of English know too much about it to begin to be able to do our job effectively with some of the pupils we have to teach.

I shall return later to the matter of literature and the kind of literature that we should be teaching but I would argue that in the common secondary school, a genuine comprehensive with mixed-ability teaching going on throughout, it is the work in language which is of the first importance to the English teacher, and that much of the most important work in language does not necessarily take place in the slot labelled "English" on the timetable. "Language across the curriculum" is essentially a name for a policy which is directing our attention to the varieties of language learning that are going on elsewhere than in the official English lessons.

My subject tonight, therefore, is the whole realm of language and the school, not just the English we teach in our classrooms but English as the medium of instruction in all the other subjects and as the major communication system throughout the school. I shall be arguing that until we can get whole school staffs turning their attention to this issue we shall not have begun to solve the problems that language learning is posing for us at the present time. I shall argue that the language development of their pupils is the central responsibility of all teachers and it is what this means in practice, and especially how it affects us as English specialists, that I want to consider for a while.

Diagnosis

I shall start by attempting to diagnose the problem and then make one or two tentative suggestions towards a solution. The problem lies primarily in the need for us to accept the language with which our pupils already come to school. Far too many language programmes in the past have been aimed at some kind of compensation for the natural language of the pupils. We have attempted to educate them out of their language and into ours. When I was last in Scotland I was given a very interesting report on language, education and employment in Glasgow, which contains a number of statements by Glaswegians about the experiences they had at school. Here's a university lecturer talking about what happened to him when he was at school:

> "I went to school in the east end of the city. The first time I heard standard English was at school. I heard people talk about 'floors' and 'walls' which I had never heard before. It took me a while to do the translations. I enjoyed it, but it was difficult. We didn't expect people to speak as we did after we heard the school teachers. We knew there was some other language. There were some places which had wireless sets but we didn't have one till the war."
>
> "You did grow up with a sense that what you were speaking was regarded as inferior."

He was obviously an articulate and intelligent person but when he went to school he "had to do the translations" to begin to understand the language that the teachers were talking and to learn the ways they wanted him to speak to them, to learn to speak "standard English" in fact. What happens with the less able, the ones who don't become university lecturers? Isn't the problem for them far more intense than the one that he is expressing? Therefore the first thing we need to recognise in our English curriculum is the centrality of the rôle of talk and that we need to begin with the language the child brings with him, which we need to accept not in

some patronising way in the hope that we may lead him to speak like us later on, but wholeheartedly recognising that it is a vernacular through which the majority of people are living.

Let's go back to literature for a moment. The other day I was privileged to hear a tape-recording of a showman who had been in the fairground business all his life. He was talking about what had happened when he was courting his wife—he's now 80, and she's 82—and he was telling stories about when he was a young man. He can't read and he can't write but he can tell a jolly good story, and this kind of oral tradition that is still very much alive I would certainly regard as an important part of literature. A friend of mine was telling me the other day of an old lady he met in Dorset who told him the tale of a very young girl who had married an elderly man who died in bed on his wedding night. She said afterwards in telling this story: "Poor thing, she had only just got time to open his eyes, when she had to close them for ever." Now that could have come straight out of Thomas Hardy. The old lady who was telling the story was illiterate, she hadn't had the benefit of reading Hardy, but she was the kind of person Hardy had been talking with when he was writing the Wessex novels. It's out of precisely such a vernacular that much of the real strength of our literary tradition derives. Go into the playgrounds and listen to the wealth of a vernacular tradition that is still very much alive in an oral culture of children's rhymes, games and songs. Because language is so closely linked with our own conception of ourselves it seems to me terribly important that we accept and respond to the language with which the child comes to school and never for one moment devalue or demean it. But what happens in schools? Patrick Creber has got a very good example in *Lost for Words* of the kind of thing that all too often happens. It's a conversation between a boy and a teacher:[1]

"BOY: When I was . . .

TEACHER: Say SIR when you speak to a member of staff.

BOY: Sir, . . . I was at . . .

TEACHER: And take your hands out of your pockets. I don't speak to the Headmaster with my hands in my pockets. . . .

BOY: Sorry—

TEACHER: . . . or leaning on a radiator.

BOY: Sorry—Sorry, SIR . . . when I was at Blacton. . . .

TEACHER: Well, boy, get on with it—when you were at Blacton. . . ?

BOY: Yes, Sir, when I was at Blacton Primary School . . . we used to go bird-watching on the cliffs and . . .

TEACHER: Jones, I suppose you realize what this lesson is. . . ?"

[1] Printed with permission from Penguin Books Ltd.

That kind of experience is one that you will find mirrored in so many of our schools even today. It's hardly surprising that when Jones finds that what he offers is received like that he stops talking and becomes a C-streamer, a drop-out, who breaks the windows and ends up lost for words. I want to argue, therefore, that we must totally re-think how we approach children when we are concerning ourselves with the language in the classroom. This is going to raise all kinds of sensitive issues about propriety. If we are going to accept the language a child brings with him then it must be all his language, whether or not it happens to fit our particular notions of what is right and proper and acceptable.

Linguistic culture

We start, then, with children who have a richness of linguistic culture of their own which for the most part we do not share. We have our language also which is in many ways an alien one to many of our pupils. We don't make nearly enough effort to mediate our language in ways which they are likely to be able to understand. The problem comes particularly, of course, in the specialist subjects of practically any secondary school where the technical language is a useful shorthand for the teacher but which can provide for many of the children an immense barrier to understanding what is going on. The bright child, that is of course the one who passes examinations, learns the jargon and he can serve it back to us. Whether he has always understood the concepts that lie behind the language seems to me much more debatable. When I was at school I spent a lot of time in physics lessons describing how a moving coil meter worked. There was always a question on this on the examination paper. But to this day I haven't

an idea what a moving coil meter acttually *is*. Nobody had ever though fit to explain the term to me. The problem is that this kind of thing occurs all to often. We too frequently work in terms of an abstract language instead of in terms of the concrete experience of the children. Unless we can deliberately reverse this we are not going to begin to be able to communicate with the children so as to make our language accessible to them at all. The first thing, therefore, is that we as teachers of English have got to work a lot harder. We have to work harder at our own language and be much more self-critical than we have often been in the past about how we use language in communication. As English teachers we ought to be the experts on this; we ought, as Bullock suggests, to be able to act as consultants to our colleagues in the field of language and communication.

One of the dreariest things about English lessons in England is that they all appear to consist of the same thing. Someone reads you a story or a poem and then hands out a worksheet which is essentially gaps to be filled in if you are remedial, or you have to rewrite the story in your own words if you are one of the bright ones. The first thing about worksheets is that we want a lot fewer of them. We need to find other ways of exploring experiences with children instead of this constant business of getting them sitting down and writing. Of course it keeps them quiet and under control but I sometimes wonder whether it does anything of any real value. There are such things as Instamatic cameras and cassette tape players, and it may be that we can create experience with our pupils through using these at least as effectively as we can through the never-ending worksheets. But, if we are going to have worksheets, at any rate let us bother more about the language we use on them. Let us look very critically at the kinds of ways in which we phrase our questions, and let us also look critically at how we present work to the children. If you look at the worksheets that we often produce on spirit duplicators when we have used the wrong paper and put on too much fluid, they look smudged horrible things. Then we tell the children that they must present their work decently and neatly. If we had to go away and re-do every worksheet that wasn't fit to be given out we might be a little more sympathetic to the work that pupils hand in to us.

Difficulty in reading

Anyway not all our pupils can read. If you can't read a worksheet, it's not much use to you. Also if you can't read, the conventional physics or geography textbook isn't much use to you either. Yet we often find children withdrawn from ordinary English lessons for remedial work being sent along with the others to the geography or history lesson and given no real help there. For many of them it must be just gibberish that is put in front of them lesson after lesson, day after day. Especially thinking about the child who is having difficulty in reading, we need to find other ways of presenting material besides the never-ending worksheets. ILEA, for example, has recently produced some exceedingly interesting materials under the title *Looking at People*. There are workcards but there are also slides to go with them and tapes which contain the content of the workcards so that a child who is having difficulty in reading can listen over a pair of headphones and have the workcards interpreted in this way. Some of the best remedial work I know uses stories put on tape so that children can sit in corners of the classroom listening to them being read to them over headphones while they follow the text in their hand. If we make proper use of modern education technology it opens up a whole new range of means that we can capitalise upon. There is a lot more to be said about this but I must move on to the kind of thing that children write for us and how we respond to it.

As those of you who have read my book *Team Teaching and the Teaching of English* will know, I am a great believer in the idea of a personal journal, an idea I got from an American, Dan Fader. He writes in *Hooked on Books* of how, when he was teaching, the pupils were given a journal in which they had to write two pages a week. They could write anything they liked, copy or anything, provided that they filled up the two pages a week. It was never read or checked in any way except to see that they had filled up the requisite amount of space. Fader's idea was that if you put children in a situation where they have to write, even if they write rubbish, sooner or later they will write about something that matters to them. My own experience certainly bears this out. I would argue that we need much more writing of this kind and much more exploring ideas through talking (the kind

of thing that James Britton calls expressive writing and exploratory talk) if we are going to enable children to make sense of the learning experiences which we are offering to them in school. Unless we can give them lots of time to do this and participate alongside them in such an exploration, I don't think anything else that we can do as English teachers is going to help very much. Talking aloud to oneself, writing for oneself, these seem to me activities that are very important. Auden's famous phrase about how do I know what I mean until I see what I say seems to me very true of the experiences of the children I am talking about.

So far I have presented a set of problems and some diagnosis of faults. I promised that I would move to a programme for action. I am going to have to put it fairly succinctly in order to get in all the things I want to say. But it is a programme which contains a number of things that you will find spelt out at large in Bullock.

In-service training

Firstly, the kind of considerations of which I have been speaking need to figure much more largely in both our initial and in-service training. We need, as English teachers, to know a lot more than many of us do about the work that has been done in language by people like Halliday and Britton, and we must know how to apply that work in terms of what goes on in the classroom. I know very few English departments in universities in England where there is more than a minimal attention to modern linguistics. There are a large number from which you may emerge as an expert in Anglo-Saxon but without any knowledge at all of the kind of issues I have been trying to raise earlier in this talk. It is amazing how woefully ignorant we are of the important work on language that has been done in the last fifteen years or so and we need in training to equip, not just English teachers, but all teachers in our schools with a basic working knowledge of just what has been going on in this area.

Secondly, if we think it important that children should develop the skills of exploring experience through language, then we need to have a planned programme in our schools for this kind of language development. It won't happen by chance. In spite of the need to accept the language the child brings with him, we also have to feed him with other kinds of language, with a variety of language experiences, so that we can enlarge his repertory of language resources and skills which he has available to him. It is only when this has happened and he can choose from amongst this repertory what is appropriate on one occasion and what is appropriate on another that he has really a grasp of the skills needed to operate effectively in the kind of society that we have created. The pupil needs to be able to operate both in the playground and the Headmaster's study. Of course most of our pupils can do that. But I was discussing with someone the other night the problems people have in going to the Social Security office and the problems of communication that can exist there. It is the very people who most need these skills who are the ones that we have hardly begun imparting them to. I would argue therefore (and I think in *Language in Use* we've got a good starting point) that we need to have a planned programme of language intervention and language development in order to build up this repertory of language for our pupils.

Some of these things also have implications for the way in which we organise our schools. If you were to sit down and deliberately try to plan the most hostile educational environment, the thirty-five or forty minute period we have in most secondary schools would be a good way of doing it. You no sooner get interested in something than you have to stop doing it in order to go off and try to become interested in something else, and the whole cycle is repeated again and again I am sure that we need longer periods within which there can be much more variety of things going on and that, in the earlier years of the secondary school at any rate, we need much more integration across subjects instead of the artificial divisions between subjects that we have tended to create in the past. If we couple this with more mixed-ability teaching, we shall have to think a good deal about the implications of this for the language work that we are doing in our classrooms.

Perhaps I could just describe an example of a particular piece of teaching in which I was engaged by way of putting some flesh on the bare bones of this talk. This was a "project," a sustained piece of work on the theme of West Bromwich. We chose this because we also had a Theatre Workshop in the school

and they were about to do a production of a documentary drama they had researched and written about Black Country coal-mining. We thought that it might be a good idea to reinforce this work by building a unit for our third year around the theme of West Bromwich. They were going to see what they could discover about the cultural life and background of the area where they lived. We were team teaching with some 300 children in the third year and about ten teachers were working with them. This meant that all the planning had been done as a team and that the children could work sometimes with one teacher and sometimes with another in different-sized groups depending upon what activity was going on. But that's really another story which is all in my book on *Team Teaching*. At any rate we started off by getting them all into the gym, which was the only place where we could assemble the whole year group, and we got the President of the Black Country Society to come along and talk to them, illustrating what he had to say by some folk songs at the same time. For about half an hour he held them absolutely spell-bound as he talked to them about the very ground on which the school was built and the coal seams that ran through it. He was a local man, and he spoke their language and he could do so without any sense of patronising them at all. They understood him a lot better than we did in fact and they had to explain things to us afterwards. The point was that all that he was saying came across to them as something that was real and that they could recognise in their own experience. Afterwards they chose various aspects of this theme that they could investigate individually or in small groups.

Motorways

For example one group came to me, and I was working on various aspects of the future of the Black Country. We were looking at the fact that it was about a hundred years previously that the canal system and the waterways had been completed and, just as we were working on this project, the motorway system was similarly reaching its completion. We were asking questions about how this was going to change the way of life of the people in the area, what effects it might have upon their quality of life as the canals had had upon their predecessors. They were exploring this in all manner of ways and I had assembled a range of resources for them to use: newspaper articles, old photographs, tape recordings, as well as things like tape recorders and cameras for them to go out to use themselves in the ways that we have been thinking about. We tried to let the pupils structure their own learning and to set their own goals in the investigations they were making. I remember one group going down to the motorway and interviewing the labourers on the site about their work; the next day the same group were having lunch with the Managing Director of a large local firm and talking with him as well. In this way they were learning a lot about social interaction, about how to use language in a variety of different circumstances, and about how you talk in different contexts. While we were doing this, a group of girls came to me and said that they wanted to make a model of a West Bromwich of the future. We talked about how they might set about this and they decided that they would construct a questionnaire that they would administer to passers-by to see what they thought a West Bromwich of the future ought to be like. The questionnaire took a lot more careful drawing up than they had expected but they did in the end produce a very creditable job. In the process they were learning a lot about exact uses of language and discovering that phrasing meaningful questions was not as easy as they had at first assumed. Then, when they took it into the streets, they learned other lessons. They learned that the way you approach busy people in the streets affects how they will answer you; they also learned that asking questions in one kind of a way created quite different results from asking them in another kind of way. And all of this they were learning by doing things, through concrete language experience in which the results were something they could see for themselves, not something that resulted from the marks the teachers made on an exercise.

Later they came home with their completed questionnaires and analysed them. They were discovering lessons about how to draw general conclusions from a variety of pieces of individual data; in fact they were doing something which had many of the particular skills of the old précis or summary exercise. Afterwards they gathered together a variety of craft materials and began to put together a very futuristic model of a West Bromwich of the future and they discovered that, if the group

was going to make a model in materials, it had to make a model in words also. In other words they were gaining experience in transactional uses of language. Later we got a Planning Official to talk to them and afterwards they decided to modify their model. I heard later that the official had also decided to modify his model, and it seemed to me that this is exactly the kind of inter-relation between school and community that we need to see in use a lot more. We need to use local people much more as a resource to come into the schools and talk with our pupils, and by no means always in a formal lecture context. The more we can give pupils the experience of talking in a controlled but informal context to other people in the community the more we are building up their confidence in their ability to use language as a flexible and effective instrument of social interchange.

Teacher as learner

I think this goes for our rôle as teachers also. It is only when we, as teachers, are actively engaged alongside pupils in a learning rôle that we can really operate effectively. I am coming to see teaching and learning as essentially a collaborative activity; when we are making sense of the experiences we are having together by talking about them and working through them we are engaging in the kind of collaborative dialogue that I, as a teacher, of English, am now interested in. This goes for literature as well. I remember that, while we were working on this project, there was one boy, not particularly bright and not in any sense of mastery of technique very good at English. One of the things he did was to write a poem about a man at a cockfight, which is, of course, a traditional Black Country sporting occasion. He wrote a poem called *Blind John* about a man who has lost his money at the fight and now has to go home to break the news to his wife. It was probably a situation that he had some experience of in someone losing money over bets of various kinds, on the horses and so on. I know that he was part of a group to whom I had read the D. H. Lawrence short story, *Strike Pay*, and I think there is internal evidence of this in the poem. I think, too, that he had listened to a recording we had of the ballad of "Wednesbury Cocking," which is in the Graves' book of *English and Scottish Ballads*. As I said, he was not good at the technicalities of English but he worked very hard at this and he kept on bringing it to various of us on the teaching team to discuss it with us. He was using us as *consultants* in other words; it was still his poem essentially, none of us "corrected" it for him in any way but we talked with him about it and in this sense collaborated with him. But all the time he was going through the process of exploring and refining the imaginative experience he had had in the construction of the poem. This seems to me what real creative writing is about and it's very different from the instant production of a stimulus and then asking children to sit down and write a poem that often passes under that name. Creative writing is something that has to be worked at and this was something that this boy was learning. But, so far as he was concerned, he was just writing a poem. Now in places it's not a very good poem; he still thinks at the beginning that poetry ought to rhyme and the rhymes lead him badly astray so far as the meaning is concerned. But once the poem really gets going I think you will agree that a genuine process of creative and poetic imagination and activity is at work. Here it is at any rate, just as he wrote it:

BLIND JOHN

Big blind John he comes from West Brom
He went to Bidu stone fair to buy some
ribbion for his wifes hair

her hair was gold her dress was
green but by him unseen

He wasn't a betting man until he got to
the fair, When he heard of a cockfight
going on there he could not see but he
went all the same,
The owners didn't bother to them it was a
game.

Then John looked at the money and looked
yet in his mind he new what was right
John was all big and strong yet he new
It was wrong to bet on the old and not on
the young
The old us blood was spilt all over the
sand now the proud owner held out
his hand.

now the old had lost so had John
now all the money was gone. now no
ribbion for his wifes hair so it would
have to stay bare.
When he got hom he was happy and
gay, but his bad news was goin to
end a bieutiful day.
he said to his wife in a slow and low voice
dear I am sorry theres no ribbion for your
hair cos I spent the money on Bidleston
fair.

Earlier I was talking about the vernacular and the strength of the vernacular tradition in a good deal of English literature. I think we can see something of that continuing strength in a piece of writing like this and part of its strength certainly also comes from the things that he had had read to him, things that he certainly would not have read for himself. He was one of the "illiterates," one of those who on the surface could not read or write very well; he certainly did not read very much for himself. But he could receive both literature and experience and put into what was essentially a sympathetic environment he was capable of transmuting what he had received into some thing that seems to me a very powerful piece of writing indeed.

I must pass on quickly to give two final examples of my theme tonight. I've already said something about the importance of the way in which we go about the task of communicating with children. But I think the way in which we talk to parents is equally important. One of the implications behind all that I have been saying is that if we are really going to make our schools effective agencies of education we have got to restructure the whole relationship between them and the communities they serve. In a school near London where I had a student on teaching practice the other day I picked up a circular to parents which read like this:

"In spite of earlier mentions of these problems in these Newsletters the school secretarial staff is still being beset by parents who ask them to convey trivial messages to pupils at school, often about things that have just been forgotten at home. During this time the telephone may be unattended or more urgent work neglected. The school's buildings are fairly widely flung and the setting and arrangement of classes complicated. We ask parents to exercise their imagination a little. It is not like finding a child in a small primary school. The secretaries have been asked not to do favours for anyone. So please do not ask—except of course in a serious situation of genuine emergency.

Another grumble: sooner or later we're going to have some kind of accident at the back entrance of the school. Some parents are still using the drive in a selfish and reckless manner and are often not penitent when this is pointed out to them. So please do not use the drive to drop or pick up pupils or for U-turns."

The Headmaster of that particular school commented to me that they did not get enough support from their parents. I think the tone of this circular is a pretty good indication of why this should be so. Co-operation from parents and co-operation from pupils are really two parts of the same problem. Worksheets and how you structure and present them are of importance; equally reports, and how you structure and present these, are of importance as well. Do we express what we are saying about children in language that the parents can understand? Do we in fact manage to convey to them any real sense of our engagement with their children as people? Or is so much of our communication with parents a mere empty ritual in which the school has ceased to be an educative agency and has become instead a form of child minding, a means of containment, of keeping them off the streets until we can find some work for them to do? All too often this is what schools seem to have turned into or at any rate this is the message we are giving to children in schools day after day by the ways in which we talk to them and how we relate to them and to their parents.

At the beginning of this talk I said that I was going to talk about language in the school and I think it will have become apparent by now that it is the teachers' language that I am worried about much more than that of the children. If only we could learn to communicate a little better how much more effectively our pupils might learn about life and literature, and how to relate through their language to the experiences we offer them in school. I want to end with a poem.

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It was written by a young boy and it is a poem about his experience in school that seems to me to summarise a good deal of what I have been trying to say in the past hour.

HE ALWAYS[2]

He always
He always wanted to explain things, but no one cared,
So he drew.

Sometimes he would just draw and it wasn't anything.
He wanted to carve it in stone or write it in the sky.
He would lie out on the grass and look up in the sky and it would be only the sky and the things inside him that needed saying.

And it was after that that he drew the picture.
It was a beautiful picture. He kept it under his pillow and would let no one see it.
And he would look at it every night and think about it.
And when it was dark and his eyes were closed he could see it still,
And it was all of him and he loved it.

When he started school he brought it with him,
Not to show anyone, but just to have it with him like a friend.

It was funny about school.
He sat in a square brown desk like all the other square desks, and he thought it would be red.
And his room was a square brown room like all the other rooms.
And it was tight and close. And stiff.

He hated to hold the pencil and chalk, with his arm stiff and his feet flat on the floor, stiff, with the teacher watching and watching.

The teacher came and spoke to him.
She told him to wear a tie like all the other boys.

He said he didn't like them and she said it didn't matter.

After that they drew. And he drew all yellow and it was the way he felt about the morning.
And it was beautiful.

The teacher came and smiled at him.
"What's this?", she said.
"Why don't you draw something like Ken's drawing?
Isn't it beautiful?"
After that his mother bought him a tie and he always drew airplanes and rocket ships like everyone else.

And he threw the old picture away.

And when he lay out alone looking at the sky, it was big and blue and all of everything, but he wasn't anymore.

He was square and brown inside and his hands were stiff.
And he was like everyone else. All the things inside him that needed saying didn't need it anymore.
It had stopped pushing. It was crushed.
Stiff.

Like everything else.

Just after he wrote that poem he committed suicide. That's a very dramatic example; it's also a very fine piece of writing. But I wonder sometimes how many of the children in our schools are having the living vitality in them killed in exactly that kind of way because we have not yet learned how to talk with them, how to collaborate with them, and—most importantly of all—how to listen to the children in our schools. If only we could attend more to the children and listen more to their voices, then perhaps schools could become a little more like the places they ought to be and seem to me to be so signally failing to be, in England at any rate, at the present time. To do something about this seems to me the job of the English teacher above everything else.

[2] Reprinted with permission from Anne Wood and *Books for Your Children* (*see* Notes and News).

The Heartland of English

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I want to suggest that, with the best will in the world much of what I would wish to do in the classroom may be meaningless for certain children.

What do I mean by "meaningless"?

First of all, let me ask what do we mean when we speak of a child learning language? Surely a child does not learn language as such; surely a child deploys language in the learning of other things and that which he is normally engaged in learning is the culture of that social group to which he belongs—the habits, assumptions, codes, insights that make sense of the experience with which the child is involved, for the world that the child knows is essentially a social product—reality is social, not psychological. Meaning is not within the object but is found in how the individual is prepared to act towards it.

The cultural experiences of the child carry what we may call "meaning potential" and that is surely what the child learns; what he learns through language is not primarily choices in lexical items or syntactical structures but choices in meanings. If a child appears to be inadequate in a language situation the real source of this inadequacy may lie in his not having access to the range of meanings that are felt to be appropriate to that kind of situation.

Ours is a pluralistic society and we have to consider that within it there may be differences within the values and assumptions of various sub-cultures; we have to consider that these differences may be reflected in different ways of meaning, different semantic styles. We have to consider that because of different social experience there may be a variety amongst speakers in the range of meanings that they can deploy in a particular situation. A child may not be deficient in lexical items or syntactical structures—he may not share completely in the range of meanings, semantic options, open to others in a specific situation. One of those others could be his teacher or another pupil with different personal and social experience. Language is habitual and it may be difficult for one individual to accept that others do not share in his meanings. In any one class a teacher will probably find a number of pupils whose range of semantic options do match his own and this may make him feel that his choice of task or materials has been valid for the whole group. But this group may not have learned this range of options in school; school may only be giving them an opportunity to rehearse certain options that they already have. What these well-favoured children can already do may too easily become the curriculum for all. Most teachers believe in voluntarism—that children may exercise choice if they wish—but what we may be facing in the classroom may be "trained incapacity"; children may have been habituated by social experience only to exercise certain of these semantic options in a particular situation and to find it difficult to comprehend alternative options.

What I am talking about is not simply access to different bodies of information; I am talking of access to different significances or different ways of processing and evaluating experience. If the ideology of the child's group does not value individual response then the child will not tend to have easy access to semantic styles that convey individual response —and so on. A child may have access to those rules of language that would enable him to go beyond immediate experience but may not have access to those semantic styles that encourage the use of these rules for that purpose. It may be difficult for such children to use their linguistic skills to speculate or make imaginative constructs. They have had experience in the real world, and they have sufficient language in terms of lexis and grammar, but such "language" tasks may be meaningless to them because they may not fall within the meaning potential of the group. The teacher's demand that they should do so may simply lead to misunderstanding or failure.

Our culture provides us in advance with some basic categories, a coherent pattern in which ideas and values may be neatly ordered. This pattern has authority because it makes

sense of common experience and, particularly for the child, others whom we trust assent to this authority.

In school the child may have to relate to a teacher who may bring another pattern, another range of semantic options. The child may not just have to find the meaning in the concrete experience but importantly the meaning in the teacher's mind.

Reality through language

Let's extend this use of language and consider another source of difficulty for language work in schools. All of us are engaged in building up a representation of reality through language; all of us construct explanations for how the physical world behaves; we construct stereotypes of valued human behaviour in the light of which we conduct our own affairs and relate to new experiences. A child makes these representations and they must be continually changing as his experience broadens and as his ability to reflect on experience increases. Surely one of the rôles of the teacher is to help the child build up a representation of reality that reflects the world as it is and not as seen through the eyes of ignorance or prejudice? Teachers must be continually asking the child to examine evidence that may disturb the equilibrium he has found—is not this one of the rôles of literature? If you accept this disturbance of equilibrium as a legitimate teaching rôle then it follows that an important use of language within the classroom must be that involved when the child explores and comes to terms with new experience. The language with which adults and children first come to terms with new experience may lack explicitness, have misplaced emphases, be badly structured, show little sense of what any auditor may wish to know. We could describe this language in linguistic terms but that is not important—it is a form of language that may be digressive, redundant, incoherent because the child is trying to assimilate new attitudes or values. This is a form of language that persists into adult life, even amongst educated speakers. In school we tend not to value this kind of language; we mistakenly seek for fluency, coherence, the kind of language that normally occurs when an experience has been stabilised but this "expressive" language is the basis of all language and if we do not accept its importance then we cut the child off from his roots in language. The less competent child is not able to move directly to the use of that more tightly constructed and logically organised language that has its origins in the written mode. If we do not accept this expressive language as being valid within the school situation then many children may play safe and express themselves only in the most simple and undemanding of forms. The child may find it difficult to move to other acceptable forms of language for it is from differentiation within this basic form of language that other language varieties will come. With many children we have to start here.

"Writing is the most common model for the spoken language of the classroom."

If this expressive language is not valued within the classroom what is the most common model for classroom language? I would suggest writing for even the spoken language of the classroom, and, in particular, the spoken language of the teacher may conform to the expectations of writing.

Writing is an unnatural act which presents many difficulties for children. It is also a meaningless act. For many children it is to be found only within the demands of the classroom. There are certain significant differences between speech and writing that may create difficulties for the child in the classroom. Written English may encode a number of messages in comparatively short structures, *e.g.* in elaborated nominal groups. These kinds of structures are not common in

normal speech. This multiplicity of messages has to be decoded by an auditor who has to learn strategies that enable him to do this. These strategies lie beyond those necessary for the decoding of individual words. They can be learned through frequent involvement with the act of reading where this kind of deeply textured language may occur. This necessity to have access to the reading experience underlines the importance of literature at all stages and with all types of pupils—especially the less academic—and makes some of the recommendations of the Curriculum Bulletins look somewhat perverse.

Cohesives

Another difficulty in writing lies in the precise and subtle representation of relationships through those functional words that are the cohesives of language. Everyday conversation, particularly within a context, may ignore them to a certain extent, but the act of writing demands their use as may some forms of spoken language within the classroom. It seems to me that the use within the classroom of a form of spoken language that has more to do with the precision and elaboration of writing than it has to do with common conversation must create difficulties for certain children. Again we have to accept the importance of involving children of all levels of ability with the literary experience.

But why involve the child with the literary experience? Why not reduce the importance of language in the school situation and concentrate on spoken language with certain groups of children? This is an approach that has many advocates and has limited support within recent curriculum papers in Scotland.

I suggest that there are certain important reasons why we cannot.

Much language use is essentially egocentric; this is particularly true of younger or less able children but this tendency does persist into adult life. A child using language to recall experience may tend to believe that everyone else has had a similar experience and there is no internal pressure to verbalise all aspects of the experience that he has had. The child may choose in a random way these things that happen to interest him—not necessarily those things that his auditors—or readers—may wish to know. The child really relies on auditors to fill in the gaps in his account from their own experience. This kind of language is acceptable in a contextualised situation or in face-to-face interaction where the auditor may press for more explicit statements. There is obviously difficulty both in writing or in talk about non-existing possibilities or about experiences that have not been shared. In any development of language the child has to be helped to move towards those forms of language that we call "context-free." He has to be able to stand outside his own experience; to move away from the inhibitions of immediate context; to speculate on the basis of past experience or given data; to inhabit imaginatively the experience of others. This kind of language skill—this access to certain uses and semantic styles—will depend largely on the child's ability to internalise at least some of the features of written language. The child who does not have access to some of the possibilities presented by written forms of going beyond immediate experience seems to me to be at a disadvantage—*in the normal classroom situation.*

Let's look at another important reason why the child—within the culture of the school—has to internalise the structural forms of the written language.

As I came into this lecture-room I came to certain conclusions about how this evening's meeting might go. I reacted simultaneously to a number of situational features—I suppose I formed a kind of Gestalt. Certainly there was a kind of implosion, responses rushing together like an animated jigsaw. This implosion represents what I "know" about this immediate situation. If I wanted to communicate this awareness to you I would have to move out of this kind of implosion; I would have to use the linear sequence of language, particularly of written language with its capacity for the precise conveying of relationships. I wish to suggest that what we tend to regard as natural thought processes, genetically given, may be culturally acquired and that eventually the child's ability to analyse and synthesise in a way that would be acceptable within our literate society may depend on his internalising of the linear sequence of language. It has been suggested elsewhere that there is no reason to believe that Aristotelian syllogisms represent natural processes of thought. If a child cannot make use of the linear sequence of language or its capacity to demonstrate relationships, embodied in the productive rules of language, for the purpose of

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evaluating, explaining, proving, then society will tend to devalue his awarenesses, his insights, his experiences—*no matter how valid they may be.*

Again I am suggesting that we may accept as *given* certain aspects of the child's employment of language but that these aspects have to be learned and *must* be learned because our society demands that they should. I am suggesting that there may be certain serious obstacles in the way of particular children in our classrooms. We have to entertain the possibility that certain children will not have access to the same range of semantic options as others and that consequently some classroom activities are meaningless to them. We have to entertain the possibility that school will not value certain forms of language through which human beings express their response to experience, even although these forms are fundamentally important as the source of all other differentiated forms. We have to entertain the possibility that the language of the classroom is derived from written English and not only will this present certain problems for children but unless children can internalise some of the features of written language a limit may be placed on their accepted and valued linguistic and intellectual development *within the classroom situation.*

The imaginary community

If there is any truth at all in what I have been saying then certain children are at risk within any English curriculum that believes that competence in language lies in the extension of the child's command of certain lexical and grammatical items or in the haphazard approach to situational language that characterises much recent work within projects, topics and themes. I would suggest in particular that many of the assumptions behind, for example, the imaginary community projects, demand close and critical examination.

Recent years have seen the production of a number of Curriculum Bulletins that provide a rationale for English teaching in Scotland. These have been supported by papers like "Projects in Practice," by L.D.C. papers of which the recent Banff and Renfrew documents are examples, and by articles and exemplars in *Teaching English.* Despite all this work, English teaching in Scotland at this moment does not have a broad philosophical basis in language studies. The tendency of Scottish teachers to distrust theory may be seen in the emphasis on processes rather than on principles, on the production of material and on the emphasis given to the more examinable parts of the syllabus. The Curriculum Bulletins contain many admirable things but one cannot help but notice their lack of specificity when it comes to any discussion of language. It is remarkable how often objectives are defined in phrases like "to continue the development of the communication skills, the skills involved in listening, speaking, reading and writing."[1] This kind of statement seems to assume that there is some kind of consensus about what is involved in these skills and that all we have to do is get on with finding appropriate material.

Even Bulletin Five[2] says little about the nature of language. The chapter that deals specifically with "Grammar, Rhetoric and Composition" says little revealing or helpful about language in the classroom and the writers pass on with an almost audible sigh of relief, and with much more detail, to the discussion of formal skills and later of expository writing.

The two papers from Banff and Renfrew have many excellent things in them. I find myself in more sympathy with the Renfrew paper and with the criticisms that Brian Boyd and John Doherty levelled at "Projects in Practice" in a recent edition of *Teaching English*—and these views imply some basic disagreement with the Banff document, particularly with regard to the place of literature in early programmes and with the place of group work in mixed-ability classes. Despite the careful work that has gone into the Banff paper a great deal that I would wish to know about language before I could begin to teach is not stated and there are many assumptions about language that I just cannot accept. The document is based on the concept of voluntarism—that children can do most things with and through language if they choose to do so and if the material is attractive—and the kind of language work that is really more suited to the well-functioning child becomes the curriculum for all children in mixed-ability groups. In this paper I have argued for a "trained incapacity" in many children and

have attempted to indicate certain serious obstacles that have to be overcome.

Egalitarian

Why should there be this lack of a broad philosophical basis in much recent work on language? It could be that much recent work has been a reaction against discrete elements in the past. The former curriculum was "fragmented" so we are for "integration"; the former curriculum was "irrelevant" so we will be "relevant"; the former curriculum was book-centred so we will be child-centred and so on. The trouble with such an approach is that the present is really dictated by the past and the necessity for a fundamental statement is ignored. English teaching has also responded to educational movements of a more global kind. The egalitarian movement may be accepted by English teachers in terms of organisation and in content without any careful examination of its suitability for language teaching; the general sociological movement is accepted without any careful examination of its consequences for language teaching; the creative/self expression movement is accepted without any careful examination of its consequences for English teaching. These approaches may be worth-while but we have to consider the possibility that some of their assumptions may run counter to the truth of language acquisition and use. It is interesting how often innovation in English teaching depends on assumptions that lie outside English teaching. The recent Bullock Report is only one document that is expressing some scepticism about the effectiveness of some recent innovations. It is also the case that English teaching has only accepted part of a new approach and this has lessened its effectiveness. There is limited value in accepting the concept of comprehensive education if you are not prepared to accept the whole package—and that includes group and individualised teaching, flexibility of class and time-table organisation and an acceptance of team-teaching.

Because of this unwillingness to examine fundamental questions about children and language—and the curse of pragmatism that bedevils much educational work in Scotland —there has been a rapid movement into the consideration of organisation and the production of packages and kits of various kinds, yet comprehensive schools and mixed-ability classes, imaginary communities, unit-studies and themes are not going to do much to improve language teaching if the basic assumptions about language are wrong. Everything depends on the skills and insights, on the sheer linguistic knowledge, of the teacher and we have paid little attention to this. I know that what I am putting forward at this moment is theory but we have to start with theory derived from experience and investigation. Sound theory may illuminate a life-time's work. It is easy to dismiss this kind of theory as "actionless thought" but need the alternative be "thoughtless action"? There is this tendency to produce highly ingenious packages of material which are then applied like a poultice to the class. Well, there are some ills that lie too deep for even the most sophisticated of poultices.

Spurious Innovation

I believe that there is a great deal of spurious curricular innovation in Scotland at the present moment. The innovation is spurious because while there may be certain changes in organisation and methodology, basic assumptions about language have not changed radically; innovation is spurious because it is derived from assumptions that come from outside language and literature; it is spurious because the consequences of innovation are not always accepted. What seems to be very common in Scotland just now is a hybrid form of English teaching—an uneasy marriage of convenience between old and new, particularly in language work. This seems to reflect an uncertainty about their rôle on the part of English teachers.

To illustrate some of these points I would like to look at certain aspects of the Imaginary Community Project but equally appropriate illustration could be found in other recent innovations. I want to consider the kind of material that is described in publications like *English for the Young School Leaver, Projects and Practice*, the Banff L.D.C. publication and recent exemplars in *Teaching English, e.g.* a recent account from Perth of a project called "Leaving Home."

One of the first claims made for the Imaginary Community approach is its relevance to the lives of pupils but many of these programmes are obviously not relevant as they deal with highly specific adult situations

and adult rôles within them and they are not accessible to children. In these projects there can be a denial of the reality of childhood and the child is seen as a potential worker, rate-payer, spouse, consumer, etc. or occupying social rôles which are not within the imaginative grasp of many children. These programmes fail to see the child as an already experienced participant in a way of life. The child's experience and his culture are essentially devalued in such programmes. It is assumed that these rôles are accessible through an exercise of the imagination but we can only imagine that which is imaginable and imagination feeds on knowledge. A child just does not have sufficient knowledge of the possibilities of these adult rôles unless, and this is an important "unless," he has access to the literary experience. If the child does not have access to these adult rôles it is unlikely that he will have access to the equally specific varieties of language that depend on them. In these projects the imagination is given little to feed on; data is often grossly insufficient and the recommendation of the Bulletins is that literary material should not be incorporated. (The Renfrew material avoids both of these weaknesses). The difficulty that children have in dealing with imaginative language can be seen in a recent report from Bankhead School, Aberdeen, in *Teaching English*. Children's work is reproduced without comment but I would wish to suggest that this attempt to enter into the Roman world leads to a kind of personalised history or to John Wayne in a toga. There is little evidence of any real exercise of the imagination because children are attempting to deal with a society whose values they do not understand. All they can do is to reproduce the material aspects of this culture or to produce anecdotes set in a superficially Roman setting. In saying this I am not being critical of the work of teachers in the school—this is just what children do when they are set to "imagine what it is like."

The recommendation that literature should not be incorporated in these imaginary community projects seems to me to be an unnecessary restriction; literature would provide both material for the imagination to feed on as well as language models and children are well used to this kind of work in primary schools. The relegation of literary material to unallocated time seems to me to be quite indefensible.

What the Imaginary Community Projects strive for is not relevance but a kind of superficial modernity—human beings involved in a contemporary situation—and this kind of superficial modernity runs through a number of thematically organised programmes. I believe with Erikson that "the characteristic concern of adolescence is the fashioning of an identity, a way of life that is habitable. This is a period when each youth must forge for himself some central perspective and direction, some working unity, . . . he must detect some meaningful resemblances between what he has come to see in himself and what his sharpened awareness tells him others judge and expect him to be . . . once fashioned, this sense of identity serves as a self-regulating device controlling the amount of ourselves that we permit to show."

It is more important that we deal with these aspects of adolescence than with the surface of contemporary society. And this is where we should work—in that tension between the growth towards individuation and the checks of society, the tension between the desired and the possible, between freedom and responsibility. Primary teachers are prepared to work in these kinds of areas using literature and personal and imaginative writing as their tools. That's where English teachers have traditionally sought to work using these same tools. Is there no relevance to be found here? Can the child's experience not be used? Can his interest not be caught here? Can his natural language not be channelled here? Why should an adolescent boy in Lanarkshire have more in common with a Highland postmistress threatened by a breaking dam than with himself?

It may be claimed that such projects extend the child's experience—but do they? Should we not be striving to increase the child's awareness of himself and his relationship with others and to develop the language through which these awarenesses may be expressed rather than involving him in these masquerades? Such personal themes provide that quality of involvement that experiment and experience have demonstrated leads to the child deploying more of his language resources. They provide a natural vehicle for those kinds of language we should be developing and they have a natural support in poetry, prose and drama, both to quicken and illuminate experience and to provide hints on

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how one's own experience may be recalled, shaped and evaluated, and other experiences shared, through language.

Fragmentation

It is further claimed that the imaginary community project and similar approaches do away with fragmentation but they are extremely fragmented as regards language. There are just too many forms of language within them—often introduced without preparation or documentation and with a most contrived sense of need—diaries, reports, newspaper articles, adverts, broadcasts, interviews, formal letters, etc., etc. This kind of work is quite at variance with what we know of language development; in these programmes language forms are seen as entities to be learned separately—they are not seen as differentiations within a firmly established personal language; they are not seen as representing a limited number of stances to experience but a series of highly specific language forms identifiable by various linguistic indices. Those children whom we most want to help just cannot develop language skills through this kind of work. Again we see the voluntarism principle at work—"children can choose to use these forms if they wish"; they cannot—unless they have access to the semantic options involved. There is also the facile belief that a few examples and precepts will enable children to use adult language forms that grow out of a particular relationship to experience and out of specific adult rôles.

Above all there is simply no sense of development in the way in which these language forms are introduced; the only constraint seems to be the ingenuity of the compiler of the project. Language development is not seen as a unitary thing in these programmes; there is no attempt to identify whether or not a newspaper report is a more sophisticated form of language than an interview and so on.

We just cannot select any kind of experience, be it linguistic or not, and present it to children—we are back to the "exposure" fallacy if we do. Experience and education are just not the same thing for all experiences are not necessarily educative. To choose experiences we have to know those which are enhancing for the learner and obviously many of these programmes just do not take the needs of the learner into account. They are concerned that the child should be rehearsed in a number of adult language forms, which he may not be ready for and may never use, and these language forms are "integrated" in a superficial way by making them elements in some scenario.

Criteria

We have to select our language experiences on the basis of some criteria and once we select them then we have to progressively organise them—we cannot jump from language form to language form, all demanding different language skills, different social experiences, different stances to these experiences. Despite what the various Bulletins say, "interest" and "pleasure" are not important criteria for "pleasure" represents an end in itself, a here and now experience, while, if experience is to be valuable, it must have a favourable effect on future experience. We must always be anticipating the next experience and not jumping about like fleas on a blanket from one language experience to another.

What we win through experience is not a fixed position, like the ability to write a formal letter or a newspaper report, but an agency for opening up new areas in language skills—and the imaginary community project is just too diffused to do this—unless the child has enough language ability to do it already. In language, development takes place within what I called "expressive' language rather than in the taking over of a number of specific new models, like the diary or the report. This expressive language is the continuing source from which all differentiated forms of language will grow. The disconnected experience—and the language forms in the imaginary community project are disconnected—has little cumulative effect. What we are hoping for is a more differentiated sense of personal identity and a richer set of interpersonal potentials expressed in a language that thrusts forward from the ego-centric stance towards that form of language that uses the productive rules of language to go beyond present experience. This involves the identification of where the child is in language and a sense of what the next step is and the kind of situations and models that take the

child on to that next step. It also involves working more closely with particular forms of language than is possible within the randomly chosen forms presented through the imaginary community projects.

If there was time it would be possible to examine the ways in which certain innovations in language teaching run counter to what we know about how children acquire and use language—work in register or language variety with its bizarre situations and its concentration on lexicogrammatical features. What is being encouraged is a kind of verbal gymnastics. This work has an appeal to teachers because it brings a kind of certainty. A class may be rehearsed in the analysis of certain language varieties just as they were once rehearsed in grammar. This kind of work is in danger of becoming the new formalism.

Then there is the rôle of literature in thematic programmes; it was the Banff paper that said we have to regard literature for young children as not an end but a means. We have the devaluing of the literary experience; texts chosen because they exemplify a particular theme or attitude; the choice of books of secondary value because they have some kind of sociological significance; the denial of the total possibility of the work of literature because it is supposed to exemplify some theme or other. There is the debasement of the book as we continually move from the book to an uncontrolled examination of our own experience or of social reality. In the Bulletins we are continually warned against the academic, literary approach—but what other kind of approach is there? If the statement of the book is spurious then this is demonstrated, not by laying the book against external criteria, but by internal evidence. We forget that the book is not reality—it is an artefact. We can only work within what the writer chooses to give us; we cannot be continually moving out of this. Again many of the themes we choose to work with are essentially adult; what we are in danger of developing is a kind of hypocrisy because the material is chosen so that children are directed towards an acceptance of our own impeccable liberal views or at least to an uneasy consensus.

Themes should be found more within the tensions implicit in Erikson's statement and not in what have been called "confront/impact" themes. The child should not engage with distant adult concerns but with those perennial themes that engage and tease us all. Lawrence, Joyce, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, in their chronicling of adolescence are more meaningful and true than those romanticised versions of working-class childnood that come from the left-wing of N.A.T.E. and which abound in the various collections now common in schools. A great work of art creates its own relevance, its own context, its own integration —beside this many of the themes and projects are superficial things indeed.

Starting point

But what do we do? I think we have to start by looking at the ways in which human beings use language and if we do this we can distinguish a number of stances to experience expressed though language. I have spoken of one already, what I called expressive language. This might be called "centred" language as the user has little awareness of the needs of his audience and communicates those things that most interest him. This kind of language may lack explicitness and selection and functions best within a context of shared experience or face-to-face interaction. Along with this form of language may go anecdote in which the main emphasis is on the relating of action. Obviously a further stance is one in which the user of language begins to be more aware of what his audience may wish or need to know. There is a more controlled recall of experience with a more obvious selection and shaping. This is the kind of language we find in so-called creative writing. Hopefully the child will begin to reflect on his experience, to evaluate it, to draw conclusions from it, to anticipate and shape the future in the light of the past. Anecdote may begin to be replaced by imaginative writing where the language user shows some awareness of the possibilities of other human beings. This intensification of the "centred" stance may be called "deep-centred"—this term indicating the individual's working over of his experiences. Many language users will never reach this particular stance to experience; their use of language will remain essentially egocentric. One obvious development within the deep-centred stance comes through the pleasure in the creative act itself—in the precise and vivid recreation, not just of experiences—but of what the creator sees as significant within the experiences. Obviously the user's involvement

with literature will give him an awareness of what is involved in the movement from centred to deep-centred language.

Other developments in the use of language involve the user in a movement into stances in which he is no longer at the centre of experience. I have already suggested one of these in the use of imaginative language—what may be called "other-centred" stance. A further development is when the user can stand outside experience and look at it objectively—what we may call a "de-centred" stance.

It is extremely difficult for children, and for many adults, to maintain this objective—de-centred stance. It is normal for most of us to mediate our responses through the personal stance and, as a result, most of our responses are a mixture of the personal and objective. The uncontaminatedly objective response which school seeks to develop is a difficult one to maintain and it would appear that there is more chance of it being developed within those school subjects like science, history, etc., where the objective or de-centred stance is more appropriate than within those necessarily limited and contrived situations that the English teacher can set up within the English programme. The English teacher should see his responsibility lying more in the encouragement of the personal and imaginative language of the child. If objectivity has to be fostered it should be in the child's ability to stand outside his own experience rather than to relate to bodies of knowledge that are really the subject matter of other school disciplines. Scientific language, for example, depends on a stance to experience and not on the imitation of certain linguistic items and if this stance cannot be learned within the science programme then it certainly cannot be learned within the English programme. The English teacher should be prepared to assert that all forms of language cannot be developed within the English curriculum just as teachers in other disciplines should be prepared to accept responsibility for the language of their own disciplines. The definition of English as a "service" department both denies the special and unique contribution that English makes to the total school programmes and the relationship between language use and stances to experience. Such a view of English within the school programmes is really an acceptance of the possibility of teaching language in a decontextualised manner.

Components

What, then, are the components of an English programme that would foster those four stances to experience that seem to me to contain those uses of language that form the basis for all-round competence.

Importantly there is oral discussion, preferably organised in small groups. The most appropriate model would appear to be that provided by the "Humanities" programme. Here we have the discussion of controversial subjects which is supported by data in the form of texts or pictures. This not only fosters reading skills in a most natural way but introduces an element of rigour. The child is required to hold an argument using the linear sequence of language; to develop some sense of audience through face-to-face interaction; to test or establish assumptions through question and confrontation; to move away from context-bound language and personal anecdote. While much of the language used in this discussion would be personal or "centred" the use of data forces the child to move into de-centred or other-centred stances by the necessity to evaluate, speculate or generalise.

Obviously an important place within any programme must be given to personal and imaginative writing within contexts provided by the kind of situations suggested in the Erikson quotation. This kind of activity starts within centred language but the pressure should be towards deep-centred and other-centred language. This kind of writing needs to be supported by both class discussion and by the use of poetry and prose. There is the need for controlled writing programmes where the child is rehearsed in particular language strategies that are included in basic communicative skills.

The development of the other-centred stance will be assisted by work in drama—particularly in rôle-playing situations. Again these situations may be found within "Erikson" situations, specific starting points being provided from literature.

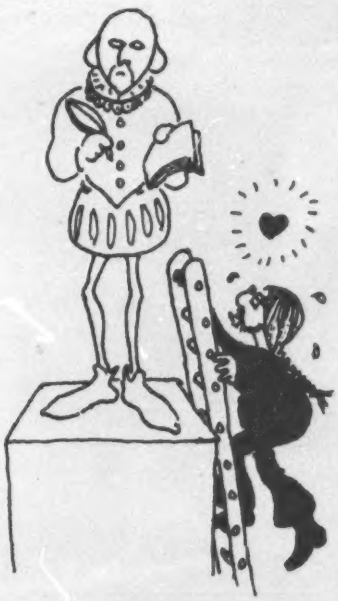
There will have to be more attention paid to the teaching of reading, to the identification of specific higher order reading skills and to the incorporation of reading material in meaningful themes so that the child is required to pay attention to the basic reading

skills—the identification of the theme of the passage, the response to significant detail, the drawing of inferences from the reading material. This is what we have to do every day as readers—we have to be able to say what the message of the material is, to extract supportive evidence from within the material and eventually to draw certain inferences from this material or to identify certain consequences or applications within real experience. Much of this work may be done within extract material which can support thematically organised programmes of work or programmes designed to foster spoken and written language skills but an important place has to be given to the study of complete texts—the short story if necessary—or to unit studies in fiction. The study of literature, the development of literary skills, should be part of the English education of all pupils. There may have to be some differentiation in the kinds of texts used with different groups and film and television may provide possibilities for the discussion of theme, plot and character but it is important that children should work within literary or dramatic experiences and not always see them as trampolines to project them into personal anecdote or sociological comment.

Thrust

These activities need not be seen as separate elements in an English programme. Unity is given through the thrust of language from the ego-centric to the context-free or by the investigation of themes that come from the kind of common experience that is implicit in Erikson's statement. There is no need to strive for the contrived kind of integration or relevance that involves the child in situations which are meaningless to him. The four stances that I have mentioned contain within themselves all the forms of language use that are required for effective participation in most social situations, including specialised school situations. A child who can inhabit these situations can deal with reports, interviews, personal recall, imaginative constructs—all the forms of language that school work may demand. The specific linguistic forms of these are trivial when compared with the difficulty of maintaining the appropriate stance. The acceptance of language skill as lying in the child's access to semantic styles and the teacher's perception of how a particular child relates to experience through language means that no language work in the classroom need be irrelevant or decontextualised or seemingly fragmented—even although it does not have an obvious relationship to some scenario. It is the teacher's awareness of how language works that provides the day-to-day unity and relevance.

We have to accept that there are particular areas of language work that are particularly the responsibility of the English teacher. Certain stances to experience may be more appropriately acquired within other subject disciplines; the English teacher has a special responsibility for those that depend on the personal or imaginative uses of language. I have argued that the child must internalise some of the characteristics of the written language and here the English teacher's responsibility for the literary experience must be one of the most powerful agencies for the child doing just that.



It is time we came home again ! !

There has been far too much attention given to adult-oriented themes and projects and to the rehearsal of children in specific language forms when they may be incapable of using the semantic styles implicit in them. The development of language is a long, slow

process and school may be comparatively unsuccessful in developing language if it involves children in meaningless uses of language or if it does not adopt a purposeful and coherent approach to language teaching. Children have to inhabit the various stances at length and their own productive work has to be supported by material that exemplifies those stances. Too much language work is haphazard or based on criteria which are quite inappropriate. We have children in school for eleven years and at the end of that time many could not write eleven lines of anything but the most simple, self-centred anecdote or support eleven minutes of interview or discussion—and this is as true of children who have been through the "new" education as those who have been through the old.

We have become too clever by far in much of our innovation. Our kits and packages reveal our own ingenuity more than they reveal our awarenesses of how language operates. We have abdicated much of our responsibility as English teachers to follow practices that are fashionably trendy or whose justification does not lie in the truth of language or literature. We have wandered in too many alien fields—it is time we came home again to those things that we know that only we can do.

April

"April is the cruellest month"
you wrote to me in October,
meaning something totally different
from my agreement with you now.

Then, over the miles separating us,
you mean your love rising
and overflowing; the anguish of new birth,
as exquisite-sharp to you
as to your mother at your first birth,
and just as bewildering.

Inside yourself you bubbled with smiles,
danced down the street, jauntily dismissed
such minor matters as work, and other people;
felt "unmanned," exposed, and yet—glad!

Together, though apart, we possessed each other
then more than we knew:
crazily confident, tinglingly tipsy,
twining eyes, hair, hands and sympathies:
no words were necessary.
With the intoxication of your glance
I was drunk deep with love:
our ordinary, everyday worlds reeling
in exhilaration of passion and "The Spring Sonata":
"April is the cruellest month."

Now it is April once again
What is there left?
Outside my window the sea washes
Whisperingly over the sand,
Without a hint of its natural turbulence.
The miles have disappeared;
We are together, yet apart.
Your eyes are sober now,
you are your own man again;
as enigmatic as the deceptive sea
outside my window.

How can I plumb those depths?
Being so close, so possessed,
has given me no rights of access;
I am impotent.
Gently, yet remorselessly,
you lovingly force me
to quench the fire of my passion,
for my warmth cannot woo you now,
so patience must mask my turbulence.
Yet my heavy heart aches
incessantly, and I brood
uselessly on what is past. . . .

Through the glass the diamond sea
dazzles in spring sunlight;
the sap rises and the trees
explode silently into leaf;
the air is full of the singing of birds:
April is the cruellest month.

M. H.

Endpiece

JAMES McINTOSH, Dundee College of Education, who will co-direct the next Institute, summed-up on the last morning of the conference

W. B. Yeats said, talking of the Summer Institute of 1937:

> "Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world . . .
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity."

Dr Johnson, talking of the Summer Institute of 1785, had two things to say:

". . . it concentrates the mind wonderfully"

and its purpose is

> "to help us endure life better or enjoy it more."

Talking of the last Summer Institute, *W. H. Auden* said at the time,

> "it enchants in order to disenchant."

Archibald Fleming said reflectively of the '75 Institute:

> "It they teach as well as they talk and drink they must be damn good teachers."*

It seems to me that these are all half-truths, (probably adding up to two fallacies), and in fact I find that I'm left with very few whole truths to believe in. But as Bill Jackson asserted, it's good to have your equilibrium disturbed.

This Institute, as always, has seemed to me to be one of the most rewarding and valuable experiences of my professional life. Quite apart from its value in the long term, however, it's a fascinating process to live through, a kind of extended conversation, with all the chopping and changing, stammering and hesitation, fluency and tentativeness, digression and redundancy, not to mention over-simplification, of the kinds of linguistic exchange that we are only now learning officially to value. (I can only assume that other people's experience here is the same as mine—perhaps a dangerous assumption.) I have found the whole thing inevitably developing into a series of polarities about my work. These are some of them: theory—practice; language—literature; ideal—practicable; destructive—constructive; progressive—traditional. Of course the very nature of our language and of human interaction tends to drive us into these false categories. So I want to say STOP THERE. Don't label me. I'm not a liberal—I'm not a reactionary—I'm not a progressive—I'm not an academic—I'm not an aesthete—I'm not a linguist. In other words, don't commit the Nothing-But fallacy. Some labels I'll accept as long as they're not exclusive and dismissive. If I have to be pigeon-holed, let me accept the term *Professional*, let me accept the description of *Enthusiast*. But these are partial descriptions, and the Institute is the means, or at least one means, for me to find out what these terms signify.

You may have felt that in the last two weeks we've had a bucketful of negative criticism . . . forming a large part of three out of five of the talks we've heard. But we've also had Syd Smyth's initial address, one I'd very much endorse essentially; we've had Bill McIlvanney's talk—and I've seldom heard a more powerful and eloquent affirmation of life and literature and by extension the possibilities of English teaching.

Even to start with, at all the other Institutes and on other Directing Panels, I felt I had a pretty clear idea of what the justification of the Institute was. But the present economic situation, (which might even lead to no other Institute taking place) has brought into even clearer focus for me the invaluable function of this fortnight. It isn't merely a shambling band of pedagogues asking for answers, sharing their ignorance, pooling their doubts (even if it is partly that). God knows that in the classroom the world is too much with us, we may be surrounded by aliens, we may never have the chance to think at any length or to any depth about what we are doing. We may not even know what's gone wrong. And everybody needs reassurance, everybody needs allies, and any professionally respectable teacher must stumble on doubts. Now if you feel

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you're the only one at odds with the set up in your school, college, church, and the values underlying it, it's only too easy to begin to think that the others must be right, you must be wrong . . . to resign, to capitulate, to say, No, I am not Sisyphus . . . Now it's always possible that they may be right, maybe you are a crazed deviant. But maybe you have to say No. It's good to know that you have the chance to move from the narrower school context and plunge into the cacophony (not necessarily the harmony) of Syd Smyth's "brain concert" (and I don't think it matters whether you feel you're the conductor, one of the second fiddles, or some frantic percussionist clashing away in the back row), the chance to explore, express honest opinions, to reach partial answers, to share concerns with like-minded people, seems to me (and I hope I'm not being blasphemous) a GODSEND. Now I realise you may say, it's all very well but . . . But what? We want practical help? We want constructive suggestions? We want answers? But there are opportunities within the Institute for these requests to be answered. However, I'd want to object to the expression, "It's all very well but . . ." All year we have to contend with the "it's all very well but" gambit. I'm sick of "it's all very well but" and of "but you can understand how . . ." and "well at least we don't . . ." and "I agree with you in principle, but . . . ." These expressions are soul-deadening. And our job is alive and dynamic, and progressive. Our job does depend on the everyday and the verifiable, but it also depends on an act of faith and a sense of values . . . and it calls for a changing of attitudes as well as a hard discipline. My own tutorial group had the title "English Teaching—A reassessment of values and aims" and in it we've argued and questioned, probed and debated, digressed, looked at practicalities and explored theories. Time and again we've come back to the importance in our work of respect for the individual, the importance of human relationships in the work we do. Of course we haven't forgotten about curriculum and methods, or disregarded the constraints of school life. We must recognise the practical, but base our teaching on a humane philosophy. Here's an anagram. Clue: one who is looked on with suspicion by teachers. Anagram: school pigsty. Answer: psychologist. How do we respond to that? With terms like airy-fairy, theory, nonsense, jargon? But I believe that we have a lot to learn from psychologists and from linguists and sociologists and curriculum planners. Our subject is vast, its name is legion. Given the right basic attitude, everything is relevant to us. So I'm being presumptuous? What else can I be? It's important to back your judgement, based on work, thinking, information, concern for those we teach. You may think I'm asking a lot, even too much. Maybe in the past we've asked for too little. Certainly, often enough, that's what we've got. Perhaps your attitude to the Institute is summed up (to paraphrase E. M. Forster) as "Two cheers for the Institute." Perhaps you may have some ideas of changes which would allow you to grant the third cheer. We'll see from what you've said in filling up the assessment questionnaire.

However, for the last point, let me simply say this. Far from seeing the Institute becoming so methods-based and practical that it resembles the school, (which is very far from saying anything at all critical of the immensely helpful practical courses), I want to see schools in a fundamental way becoming more like the Institute, so that we could feel, to quote those superb lines from Bill McIlvanney, "To have been there, is truly to have nowhere else to go."

Open Plan Primaries and the Language Arts

"Open plan" primary schools vary greatly in design. Some simply offer sharable communal areas adjacent to two or three fairly conventional classrooms. Some are so designed as to rely almost totally on furniture arrangement to differentiate the use of space. Between these extremes, there exists a wide range of degree of openness. The "language arts," a term introduced to primary schools by the 1965 Primary Memorandum, has since developed its meaning differently in different schools, so that it varies almost as much as "open plan" schools do themselves. Our contributor therefore faces enormous problems in offering generalisations about her dual subject.

She is in a strong position to overcome them, however. Her work as a Staff Tutor in Jordanhill's Department of Inservice Training has taken her into a wide range of "open" schools and into contact with many teachers working in them.

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There are two preliminary points to be made. First, varied as they are in design, open plan schools, being new, are bright, well-furnished, attractive places. Second, children are still taught in "classes." The second point deserves elaboration.

Many teachers feared that when open plan schools came in, the well-established system of the "class" with its "own" teacher would go out. Without exception, in all the open plan schools I have visited, the children have been grouped in classes according to their chronological age. Each class has its "own" teacher but this does not exclude the possibility of team or co-operative teaching taking place within the school. Each class also has its own base. In some of the earlier designs this may resemble a classroom. In more recent buildings, the class base may simply be an alcove or bay which is used for class meetings and discussion. Even in the most open designs, where there are very few internal walls, each class and its teacher has a well-defined area which they can call their own.

Thus the children in open plan schools still retain the security of their own base and their own teacher, but they can also enjoy the stimulation of working in the communal areas, which are shared among groups of classes. They are also given the opportunity to come into contact with teachers, other than their own, who may offer them varied personalities as well as special interests and enthusiasms.

These points made, it seems sensible to use the 1965 Memorandum as a starting point and ask: how can the aims of Language Teaching as stated in *Primary Education in Scotland* be implemented in the open plan school?

The first two aims could be considered together. They are:

(*a*) to encourage fluent self expression in speech and writing;

(*b*) to develop the child's power to express himself in an intelligible and acceptable form.

Many teachers, especially those who work in areas of social deprivation, find that they have great difficulty in implementing aim (*a*) and are therefore prevented from moving on to tackle aim (*b*). If we consider the problem of getting children to express themselves we might identify two important factors. They need something to talk about: an experience. They need someone to talk to: an audience. I would suggest that the open plan school can make a positive contribution to both. It offers better facilities for providing interesting and thought-provoking activities for the

children, thus giving them more incentive to talk. In the communal areas children encounter a wider variety of "listeners." In addition to their own classmates and teacher, they may meet children from other classes, who are much more likely to question them about what they are doing; other teachers, including promoted staff; also auxiliaries and possibly parents. Once a flow of language has been released teachers can forge ahead with the task of improving its quality.

The third aim is "to cultivate the habit of intelligent listening." Some would say that open plan offers no improvement here, quite the reverse. I have to admit that even the most "open plan" teachers have said to me that occasionally, just occasionally, they yearn for the privacy of their own room and the chance to shut the door on background noise which destroys the atmosphere they are trying to create. Before condemning open plan on this count, we would do well to remember that this problem is nothing new, for many older buildings are not well sound-proofed. In a thoughtfully organised open plan school there is every chance of cultivating intelligent listening and perhaps the fact that teachers have to plan positively for this activity will make them think more carefully of exactly what they want the children to listen to, and for how long they should be expected to remain attentive. In all the open plan schools which I have visited there has been at least one room available for either noisy or quiet activities. Teachers and children are able to withdraw from the busy, and sometimes fairly noisy, shared areas so that they can listen to a story in relative peace or, alternatively, make a great deal of noise during drama or music without disturbing other groups.

The final aim of language teaching is stated as "to train the child to read thoughtfully and critically, acquiring the basic ability to read with understanding, forming lasting reading habits and extending his experience by the exploration of factual and imaginative writing." Clearly teachers in open plan are continuing to implement this aim through the use of systematically planned programmes in reading, which are also in use in more traditional buildings. But an open plan design with its communal areas can offer a new dimension. In schools of closed design books were either available in class libraries or in a central library. The former were small collections offering a limited choice. The latter might contain vast numbers of books but accessibility was often a problem for the library could be distant from classrooms and its use was often timetabled in quite a rigid way. Libraries are frequently set up in the communal areas of open plan schools. The combined libraries of four class groups can be gathered into an attractive display on trolleys, racks and shelves, thus giving the children access to four times as many books as could be provided in a closed classroom. As the communal areas adjoin class bases they can be in fairly constant use and there is no real need for a formal timetable. Of course the sheer provision of many books will not in itself ensure that the children will read them. One might say that in open plan the children cannot fail to notice the books provided, but it is up to their teachers to devise tactics which will encourage them to sample what is available and to make sure that enough time is given to purposeful reading activities.

Advantages of open plan

I hope that I have been able to re-assure readers that the aims of language arts as stated in the Primary Memorandum can be successfully implemented in open plan primary schools. These aims can only be achieved in practice through a variety of language activities and the Memorandum identifies these as SPOKEN ENGLISH, DRAMA, LISTENING, STORY-TELLING, READING, POETRY and WRITTEN ENGLISH. Let us now consider each one in some detail.

I have already stated that I feel that there may be better opportunities for developing Spoken English in the open plan school due to the existence of communal areas but teachers often worry about noise levels. This can be a real problem when large numbers of children are involved. The arrangement of furniture to provide small bays in which a group can work together will help to keep down noise, as will carpets and other soft furnishings, but it is really a matter of discipline which must be enforced by all teachers who share the area. Children must learn to keep the noise level at a pitch which allows everyone the freedom to work at their chosen or assigned activity. This is not easy to achieve but it is a valuable piece of social training and I have noticed that where the children are gainfully occupied in projects

which engage their interest, the noise level has been surprisingly low. For many teachers the problem lies in finding out how to achieve this happy state.

Noise may also be a problem when teachers wish to tackle dramatic activities. Adequate space is needed and the layout of the communal area and class bases could limit scope considerably. Fortunately, most open plan schools have halls which can be used for large scale work but, as these halls are likely to be used for P.E. and dining, and may also be circulation routes, they are in fairly constant use. An alternative to the large hall is the "noisy/quiet" room which is provided in many open plan designs. Sometimes this is "stepped" to form a kind of amphitheatre which offers exciting possibilities for dramatic presentations. Stepped areas such as these are called kivas.

In one school I visited, the infant kiva had been transformed into Aladdin's cave (frieze paper, cellophane and tissue) for the month of December. The mysterious atmosphere enchanted the younger children who responded eagerly to stories and dramatisations.

As I have suggested, "listening" may be a problem in open plan because of background noise from other groups. One means of listening, which is not affected in this way, is through the head-phones of an audio-distribution unit connected to radio, tape recorder or record player. Children nowadays accept transistorised equipment of this sort as part of everyday life and can learn how to operate it efficiently and competently. Open plan schools usually have a generous allocation of sturdy, lightweight, audio-visual equipment which, if put to good use by teachers, can offer new opportunities to develop listening skills. Taped material may be commercially produced or may have been prepared by teachers and children in school. I have seen very successful "audio-visual corners or bays" set up in the communal areas of some open plan schools. Here up to six children can listen through head-phones undisturbed by any noise in the rest of the area. The openness of the design makes it easier for a group of classes to share these resources which may have been set up by a teacher who is an enthusiast. An auxiliary is usually responsible for supervising this area while it is in use. She has the task of setting out the equipment when needed and returning it to a lockfast store after use. In many schools auxiliaries become expert at taping material from broadcasts. It does not take long for a school to build up a useful resource of taped material including stories, poems, songs and music. It is especially useful when this material can be catalogued under topic headings which are related to the centres of interest being studied. So far, in the west of Scotland, taping in primary schools is restricted to sound broadcasts but in open plan primaries in Aberdeenshire video tape recorders are available so that TV programmes can be recorded in school.

Stories

Listening to stories may be one of the activities possible in the A-V area but it would be sad to think that children in open plan schools might be denied the pleasure of gathering round their teacher to hear her tell them a story. I am happy to report that, in all the open plan schools I have visited, story-telling is still flourishing. In fact, the open plan school may offer superior conditions for the comfort of listeners. Most class bases are equipped with padded bench seating in one corner. Some even have bunk beds. All have carpets. These facilities make it easy for teachers to gather an informal group around them. Kivas are ideally suited to story-telling, for they give privacy as well as peace and quiet, but their use may have to be time-tabled as they will be shared by quite a number of classes. Many teachers prefer to use their class bases for telling stories and reading poetry but, unless they time these activities carefully, they can be disturbed by background noise. A practical solution to this problem has been found in schools where the teachers have all agreed that certain parts of the school day will be quiet times (often at the beginning and end of morning and afternoon sessions) during which the children will be in their class bases.

Obviously these conditions will be suitable for the enjoyment of poetry as well as stories. But there may be other benefits. Teachers in the primary school frequently integrate poetry into their topics and themes. If one sees the open plan school as an ideal setting for a topic-based approach to primary education then one will claim that it offers better opportunities for developing a taste for poetry. Availability of space in communal areas may

allow teachers to co-operate in building up a "poetry corner" containing a selection of anthologies and poetry cards. Poems written by children can also be displayed, as can art work stimulated by poetry.

The teaching of reading is such an enormous topic that it is quite impossible to do it justice in a short article. Reading in open plan, like other language activities, may be very like reading in more traditional buildings. If there are disadvantages they will be the now familiar ones of background noise and possible visual distraction. I have already described how some teachers combat these by establishing quiet *times*. It is also possible to establish quiet *places*, working areas where a study atmosphere is expected, where the arrangement of furniture and dividers partly encloses the group and directs their attention inwards towards the assigned or chosen activity. The height of display boards and dividers usually permits adults to maintain visual contact with other areas but seated children are effectively screened off. The advantage which open plan can offer is in the provision of attractive and accessible library areas which are well stocked with suitable works of fact and fiction.

When dealing with the teaching of written English in the open plan school it may be useful to note that Connie and Harold Rosen in Chapter 3 of *The Language of Primary School Children* (Penguin, 1973) express the view that the crucial questions for teachers to ask in relation to children's writing should be "What are the children doing?" rather than "What kinds of writing are they covering?" Open plan schools have been designed for "doing" and in this respect they may well provide a superior environment for the stimulation and development of written English. Once again it is the teachers responsible for organising the activities who must ensure that they have successful language outcomes.

The rôle of the class teacher is therefore no less important in the open plan school than it is in a traditional building. However, the promoted staff may be given even greater responsibilities for organising and developing language work.

Promoted staff

The Assistant Head (Early Education) usually assumes responsibility for the teaching of reading in P1 to P3, choosing the reading programme she considers best suited to the needs of her children and the design of her school. In all the open plan schools which I have visited the infant departments have made the most successful transfer to the more open teaching areas. No doubt this is due to the fact that most infant teachers are accustomed to working a group system which depends on offering a wide range of activities. The choice of reading material naturally varies from school to school but many open plan schools prefer the Breakthrough to Literacy material. It would seem that the individualised nature of this approach suits the freedom offered by the open plan design.

The rôle of Assistant Head (Upper School) is not so clearly defined but, in some schools, teachers, holding this position, are responsible for the development of language arts from P4 to P7. Traditionally this work was developed through the use of course books of extracts and exercises. More recently the creative writing movement has caused teachers to change their approach but the move towards more freedom has been gradual and by no means uniform. While welcoming the emphasis on the interest and involvement of pupils and the recognition that children's personal writing can be more meaningful and valuable than the completion of a series of unrelated exercises, some Scottish teachers have found it difficult to relate the teaching of formal skills to this approach. No clearly defined structure for teaching language arts in the upper primary has emerged and the responsibility for planning a programme designed to help children apply their developing skills has been left to promoted staff within the schools. This task is shared by Assistant Heads in all types of primary schools and many, including those in open plan, will still rely on the provision of readers and course books to form part of their language programme. It is more likely, however, that, instead of ordering class sets of books, the A.H.T. will order smaller numbers of a variety of texts to use with groups of children. The small group is more effective than the class group when discussion is desired and the provision of a range of material allows the teacher to consolidate progress at different levels. This is normal practice in most primary schools, but I would suggest that in open plan such a system can work well because it is

easier for teachers and children to share these resources.

Programmed material, like S.R.A. Laboratory, is popular in open plan schools, partly due to its individual nature, but also because it can provide a structured means of exercising skills. Labs. can be placed in communal areas so that children from more than one class base can make use of them. This is particularly helpful to teachers who have children who are either very slow or very bright, for, in a communal area, shared by several classes, there will be a variety of material for different stages. Children can work at their own pace but remain with their own age group.

Some head teachers and A.H.T.s (Upper School) who work in open plan schools are firmly convinced that the key to successful language work in the upper primary is to find contexts in which the various language skills can operate. They therefore consider it an important part of their rôle to encourage their teachers to develop an effective approach to topic work. An A.H.T. who does not have her own class group can do much by working directly with children from other classes. Readers may be interested to know that the excellent work, described by Miss May Barclay in a recent issue[1] of *Teaching English*, was carried out in an open plan school. Once again it is the openness of communal area and class base which makes this kind of co-operation easy for there should always be available space for a group to work in. This kind of physical arrangement cuts down communication problems and makes it easier for teachers to learn from one another.

This is also possible when the A.H.T. is teaching full-time as I discovered on a recent visit to an open plan school where the A.H.T. was working on a centre of interest based on Scott O'Dell's novel *Island of the Blue Dolphins*. Exciting displays of art/craft work, accompanied by writing, decorated class base and communal area. A life-size figure of the heroine, Karana, dressed in feathers from the auxiliary's second-best hat, dominated the library, where a special display of books relating to the topic had been gathered. These were frequently consulted by the children, who used them to find answers to many of the questions raised during the topic.

As the work progressed the A.H.T. and her children made more and more use of the communal area both for activities and for display. Two other teachers who worked in this part of the school (both probationers) were considerably impressed by what they saw and, after a short time, they felt able to make comments and ask questions. The eventual outcome of their interest was that one decided to try out some of the teaching techniques with his own class group, while the other, whose base was next door to the A.H.T.'s, was encouraged to join her in planning a new topic for the following term which was to be carried out by both teachers working co-operatively.

When the A.H.T. was explaining this to me, she made it clear that she considered the openness of the building was an important feature which allowed ideas to spread quickly. She also pointed out that, by using the communal area, she was able to demonstrate her approach to less experienced members of staff without making a formal demand that they come into her classroom to see "how it ought to be done." This worked both ways for she was also able to observe the teachers who shared the area and to keep an eye on their children's progress.

Head Teachers of open plan schools make similar comments, pointing out that openness of design allows them to roam through their school in a free and informal manner. If they wish to, they can easily become involved in the teaching. They can quickly learn their teachers' capabilities and can give help where it is needed. Strengths as well as weaknesses are exposed and teachers can be encouraged to develop these to the benefit of their colleagues. For instance, where a teacher has a special interest in drama, the individual concerned may be invited to work with a number of class groups while her colleagues cover art/craft, music and P.E. This kind of teamwork is not uncommon in schools of traditional design but it is much easier to organise in an open plan school.

Specialising

The aesthetic subjects provide a curricular area within which teachers find it easy to co-operate but there are other examples of "teaming" which involve language arts. Some teachers prefer to work together in basic skills. Recently I met three upper primary teachers who had decided to specialise. One was responsible for reading and other language

[1] Vol. 8, No. 3, May 1975.

work, the second for maths and the third for environmental studies. An obvious question raised by this system was how to separate the three elements, for language must surely enter into all of them. Although the teachers had welcomed being able to concentrate on just one subject during early stages of the experiment at the end of the school year they were getting stale and wished for more variety and less repetition. They found the rigid timetabling irksome and complained of lack of flexibility.

In another school the teachers decided that, rather than divide according to subjects, they would separate the different kinds of activities. Three areas were established for the year group of children: direct teaching; study area; workshop. Children circulated, spending part of each day in each area. The teachers circulated too, but they moved round on a weekly cycle. This enabled them to keep in touch with all aspects of the curriculum. All work was planned on a co-operative basis and the teachers spent a considerable amount of time in group discussion.

The number of teachers involved in a team situation varies and it is too soon to make any value judgments about what is the ideal number, but it certainly seems to be fairly easy to start co-operation between two. In a recently-opened Mark I (Glasgow) two teachers carried out an interesting experiment last session. The school serves a new housing scheme near the city boundary and the children in P4 and P5 had been attending since it opened two years before but their teachers were completely new to the open plan situation. During the first term they both functioned independently keeping their children mainly in the class bases. Although there was some furniture in the communal area it was rarely used. The head teacher, whose rôle in this project was unobtrusive but vital, was content to allow both teachers to establish themselves but she made it clear that she would welcome experiment and that she was anxious to see the full potential of the open plan building exploited.

Early in October the P4 teacher attended a three-day in-service course advocating a contextualised approach to language work. Immediately she returned to the school she began to try out various ideas and was delighted to find that they were most effective in evoking first a verbal then a written response from her pupils. The theme was "The Street." Soon the children had made a large frieze picture of their own street with houses, shops, people and traffic; appropriate vocabulary was discussed and word lists flanked the picture; stories were invented about the people and dialogues between shoppers developed; important characters, such as "Fred the Painter" and "Joe the Road-Sweeper," were portrayed in life-size paintings. The children suggested "biographies" for these characters and talked and wrote about their work. Exciting incidents took place in the street, such as an accident between two cars and a fire above one of the shops. The emergency services were called in, triggering off a new set of activities which included designing a fire appliance and ambulance. This meant more portraits of new characters: policemen, firemen, ambulance drivers, etc. Splendid class and group discussions were developed by the teacher who used these as a means of encouraging the children to try various kinds of writing: reports of the incidents; the thoughts of the spectators and participants; explanations and accounts of how the fire started, etc. It was soon clear that the topic was a great success. Pupils were highly motivated and their work was improving in both quantity and quality.

The success of this project attracted the attention of the teacher of P5 who thought that her children might benefit from a similar approach. In consultation with the head teacher the two teachers began to discuss how they might attempt to work together. The P4 teacher was happy to have found an effective way of stimulating language work but she was worried about her pupils' progress in maths. Fortunately her neighbour offered to run a maths workshop. It was decided to use both class bases and the two adjacent communal areas to create four different working spaces, each for a different activity. The communal areas offered more scope for art/craft activities and library. Both these resources could be shared by other teachers and classes who could use them when the P4/5 groups were not engaged in their co-operative project. The maths workshop and the language arts work both required close supervision and some direct teaching and would therefore be better sited in the class bases. An auxiliary would be stationed in the library area which was also supplied with S.R.A. material, while the

art/craft area would be supervised by parents working on a rota system.

Four work sessions per week were organised, each lasting just over an hour. The children of the two classes were divided into four mixed-ability groups. In the course of a week each child experienced all the activities and worked with both teachers. Each teacher was able to concentrate her attention on her chosen topic. The maths workshop consisted almost entirely of practical work connected with measurement.

Language work

All language work was related to the topic selected — the Farm — and its successful outcome depended to a great extent on the support of the visual material made in the art/craft area. The teacher who was responsible for language also organised the art/craft activities. Library sessions were also partly dependent on the progress of the centre of interest for children soon raised questions about the topic which led them to make use of the special reference material provided. They were also expected to complete a library assignment during their time in this area but when this was finished they could choose to read for pleasure from the extensive collection of children's fiction. The Head Teacher involved herself with the project by visiting the library area as frequently as her other duties allowed. She talked with the children about their work and her encouragement and interest gave the teachers the support they needed during the early stages of the experiment.

After a short trial period the teachers realised that the order in which the children experienced the different activities was important. Certain language tasks (*e.g.* instruction writing) depended on the children having made something in the art/craft area (*e.g.* a model cow or milk tanker) before they came to talk and write. Alternatively some of the art/craft work depended on the stimulus given by stories and poems which the teacher read to the children during their language session. Slight modifications were made to the work programme to ensure that the best sequence was achieved and in a few weeks the system had settled into a routine.

I visited the school on several occasions as the topic progressed and was always struck by the energy and enthusiasm which was evident in both children and teachers. It was clear that the children's energies were being channelled into worthwhile educational activities and the work which they were producing was of high quality. There was no question of language work being relegated to "second best" as opposed to the "fun" of the art/craft area for the children were finding that creating and communicating ideas through words could be a highly enjoyable activity.

The children also enjoyed moving round the area and working with both teachers. At all times they were responsible for finding the materials and equipment they required and for returning it to the correct place when they had finished using it. The teachers had to work hard at maintaining good standards of tidiness and they were quite firm in dealing with children who did not conform. There was a clearly defined structure in the four sessions which gave security, but within that structure children were offered a measure of freedom coupled with some responsibility. In a short time they were showing the confidence and satisfaction that can grow from successful achievements.

Some teachers fear that in open plan schools children will be able to 'float" from area to area without achieving anything. The system that I am describing goes some way to preventing this for the four groups of children involved were assigned to definite areas and had set tasks to perform. Total numbers were small enough for teachers to keep a close check on the groups.

Recording children's progress was a question which the teachers discussed early on. In art/craft the display of finished work provided ample evidence. In the maths workshop each child had a simple check list which was ticked as he or she completed each assignment. In the language area children collected all their written work in individual folders. Fair copies were made of any items to be included in wall displays. The two teachers involved had frequent discussions about the progress of their pupils and in both maths and language they were quickly able to identify children's specific problems. These problems were dealt with in basic skills time when each teacher had her own class group.

Problem children

When I discussed the project with the teachers they told me that they had found it stimulating and enjoyable to work together.

They pointed out that it was helpful to share "problem children" but remarked on the fact that they shared the most able and responsive children too. They did not conceal the fact that they had to work hard and that at times there were disagreements but in spite of these factors they said that they preferred working co-operatively to being entirely on their own. I asked them if they thought it a good idea to extend the co-operation to fill more of the teaching week and to cover the entire curriculum. Both replied that they would prefer to retain their own class groups for part of the time. I asked them if they would like to extend the system to include more children and teachers for the design of their school would allow a team of four teachers to work together using four class bases and two shared areas. Once again their reply was cautious for they pointed out that sheer force of numbers could cause problems of communication. A more complicated system would have to be organised. Four teachers would require to accommodate to each other and the possibilities of friction could multiply. Having stated these reservations, the teachers said that they had no other reasons against such a scheme, which might work out satisfactorily given the right team of teachers, a suitable number of children and the necessary resources. At this point in the discussion both teachers mentioned that they had gained enormously from the support given by their head teacher. Her positive attitude and helpful, practical suggestions during the planning stage had encouraged them. Continued interest and support during the project had helped them to persevere when things had not worked out perfectly. She had shown them that she valued their efforts, but had also been prepared to make constructive comments which could improve the system.

In discussion with the head I discovered that she was delighted with the way both children and teachers were working. She remarked upon the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff and on the great improvement that she had observed in the children's work and in their attitudes to learning. She also pointed out that at last the open plan building was being put to fuller use.

Apart from that final remark all that she said could apply to a traditional school. In fact, a great deal of the good work carried out in open plan schools is very similar to that achieved in older buildings of closed design. There are, however, certain advantages in open plan which have been touched upon in this article. The first advantage is related more to the newness than the openness of these schools and it relates to the bright and attractive interiors with good facilities for varied activities, the custom built furniture and the generous supplies of equipment and materials. More important, perhaps, is the openness which facilitates communications allowing teachers to see each others' strengths and weaknesses and making it easier for them to share resources. Leading on from this is the possibility of co-operation in more than the sharing of equipment for here the open plan school can give teachers more choice in their organisation of children and resources.